

Local Labor Management Relationships as a Vehicle to Advance Reform:

Findings from the U.S. Department of Education's Labor Management Conference

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Summary of Findings

In February 2011, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) – along with co-sponsors from the American Association of School Administrators, the American Federation of Teachers, the Council of the Great City Schools, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the National Education Association, and the National School Boards Association – brought together over 150 school districts at a [conference](#) called “Advancing Student Achievement Through Labor Management Collaboration.” In order to attend, a team composed of the superintendent, the president of the local board of education, and the president of the local teacher organization all made a commitment to work together to create or deepen a labor management relationship focused on advancing student learning. Twelve districts noteworthy for the partnership of their district, board, and teacher organization facilitated conversations with district leaders and others in attendance at the conference. Individual district background and profiles of the progress made improving student performance results as well as a summary of the significant policy progress the collaborating partners have made together can be found at the U.S. Department of Education Web site <http://www.ed.gov/labor-management-collaboration/conference/district-background-information>. The 12 districts were:

- [ABC Unified School District, California](#)
- [Baltimore City Public Schools, Maryland](#)
- [Denver Public Schools, Colorado](#)
- [Douglas County School District, Colorado](#)
- [Green Dot Public Schools, California](#)
- [Helena Public Schools, Montana](#)
- [Hillsborough County Public Schools, Florida](#)
- [Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland](#)
- [New Haven Public Schools, Connecticut](#)
- [Plattsburgh City School District, New York](#)
- [Independent School District 15-St. Francis, Minnesota](#)
- [Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, North Carolina](#)

In the case studies that follow, we attempt to capture what these noteworthy local partnerships have accomplished and, more importantly, how they accomplished it. ED commissioned present and former Teaching Ambassador Fellows, teachers selected for one-year leadership assignments, to conduct this work. The fellows used interviews, document analysis, and digital audio recordings of presentations made by district leaders to learn from the opportunities and challenges, the successes and missteps of these 12 district partnerships. This introduction is a synthesis of the patterns in both the work being done by the districts and how they are doing it.

Several opportunities and limitations are present in the district studies that should be taken into consideration when reading them. First, ED demonstrated a commitment to practitioners by selecting teachers that have a policy background to tell the story of these noteworthy districts. This practitioner lens provides depth and richness to the case studies but must be acknowledged as the perspective of the authors. Second, we had excellent access to top-level leadership in each of these districts as well as their student achievement data, but few of the researchers were able to spend time in the districts they studied or talk to rank-and-file faculty or staff. Additional exploration of the perspectives of teachers and staff in these districts would be valuable but beyond the scope of this current project. Third, the selection process for the 12 noteworthy districts occurred after much thoughtful debate between the sponsoring organizations. This demonstrates the inter-organizational credibility of the 12 districts, but the selection process was not based on a criteria or methodology that might be used in a rigorous research design.

This introduction will briefly examine what the districts are doing and more importantly, how they are doing it. This is not intended to be a template for replication; instead, this should be viewed as resource to stimulate ideas, catalyze action, and inform thoughtful conversations about how best to support student learning.

What are districts doing?

The 12 districts demonstrate three dominant trends of activity: teacher evaluation, compensation, and career development. These trends may be due in part to incentives, such as state or federal grant programs, or other external reform pressures. Grant programs such as Minnesota's QComp program and ED's Teacher Incentive Fund have supported efforts to try innovative ways to better align resources for student learning. The external funding has allowed districts to experiment in ways that might not have been possible using district funds.

For several of the districts, these policies developed over the course of four decades. For others, that progress occurred in less than four years. Eight of the 12 districts trace their collaboration back to a crisis point, typically a strike or potential strike, which marked a low point in the labor-management relationship that proved to be a catalyst for developing policies, processes, and dispositions that led to more productive relationships. Collaboration in all 12 districts resulted in policies around evaluation, compensation, and career advancement. It is a body of innovation that defies generalization, often uniquely adapted to local circumstances.

Evaluation

Ten of the 12 district partnerships specifically set out to make teacher evaluation a tool for improving student outcomes. Although there are common core factors, such as the incorporation of student growth data as evidence in the evaluation process and the use of outcomes of the evaluation to inform career decisions such as continuing probationary employment, tenure, and advancement, their approach to improving teacher evaluation systems varies widely.

At least nine district teams aligned, or are working to align, evaluation, compensation, and professional development with an emphasis on student learning. The degree to which student achievement tests are included in evaluations varies widely from district to district. Douglas County and Denver include student growth measures as 50% of their evaluations of teachers as mandated by state statute. Hillsborough, New Haven, and Winston-Salem/Forsyth, collaborated with their unions to determine how value-added measures were to be incorporated into their evaluation systems. However, ABC Unified and Helena superintendents are vocal opponents of using student test scores as a part of teacher evaluations. ABC Unified, Douglas County, Montgomery County, Plattsburgh, and St. Francis, are using peer evaluation processes. In these systems, teachers join principals and other administrators in assessing teacher performance.

Compensation and career development

Ten of the 12 collaborating districts are developing and implementing performance-based compensation systems. Here the common factors are telling. All ten integrate student performance data, either at the classroom or school level. In most cases, they phased in these pay systems slowly and allowed teachers the option of remaining on the traditional salary schedule if they had a certain number of years of experience. New teachers are automatically inducted into the new compensation structure. To encourage teachers to opt into the new systems, districts developed new salary structures with higher earning potential.

For many of the districts, including Baltimore, Denver, Douglas County, Helena, and St. Francis, compensation reform is part of a broader effort to rethink the teaching profession. Baltimore's effort serves as an example. There, the district partners established through their labor agreement ongoing structures to ensure shared decision-making around compensation and career development. They are committed to eliminating salary increases based solely on advanced degrees and are developing four career pathways for teachers. Negotiations around determining a teacher's placement in career paths were contentious at times, but agreement was reached when the negotiation team agreed to consider multiple factors, including advanced degrees, years of experience, and a teacher's evaluation history for placement in these four career pathways. Their agreement goes so far as to include teacher representation in decision-making about resource allocations. Denver engaged over 250 school leaders, teachers, parents and students to provide input and feedback on their teacher performance assessment system. Douglas County uses a similar group to continue to inform its teacher evaluation system. Helena and St. Francis also use teams of teachers to examine broad issues of instructional improvement to make recommendations that drive district policy. Ultimately, these districts have negotiated structures to sustain professional learning communities at scale.

Other collaborative policy initiatives

In addition to these areas of common activity, the collaborating districts are creating pockets of innovations in other fields: strategic direction setting, shared responsibility for student outcomes, professional growth and development of teachers, transfer and reassignment, reduction in force, the evaluation of principals and administrators, the evaluation of school boards, employee benefits, and dynamic problem solving. Analysis of their progress is available in a document called “Guiding Principles in Action,” at the [conference Web site](#). In these other areas, innovation is much more divergent. For example, there are very few examples of progress on administrator and school board evaluations or employee benefits. Additionally, work on tying student achievement, particularly to teachers in subjects and grades not covered by state standardized tests, is nascent in many of the districts. Furthermore, with the exception of Hillsborough County, most districts are doing little to develop formative and summative assessments or other measures that might provide a robust tool for determining student growth. This may be because all 12 districts report that they are doing much of their work in isolation with little transfer of knowledge into and out of the district.

How are districts doing it?

At the same time they are making progress on policy issues, the 12 collaborating districts are creating new ways of doing business. They are rethinking their organizations, and creating new structures and processes for getting work done as partners. As leaders in the field, the collaborating partners are using and developing distinctive knowledge, skills, and dispositions to accomplish their work together. Eight of the 12 districts have established foundational commitments in the form of joint statements in favor of collaboration. All 12 of the districts demonstrate a shared commitment to goals and transparency that is atypical for most districts. As they go forward, these districts are creating a body of knowledge that can serve as an example for other districts trying to take steps in the same direction.

Structures and processes

The collaborating districts are beginning to do their work differently, often in ways that fundamentally break with tradition. They are rethinking shared policymaking processes such as collective bargaining and meet-and-confer settings, as vehicles to address more traditional issues, such as wages and benefits. They often begin with a shared commitment in principle that places improved student learning and closing achievement gaps as an explicit priority for their work together. More often than not, these commitments reaffirm fairness in the work place and develop the professional foundation for teaching and teacher leadership, as well. Teacher leadership is essential to dynamic decision-making. St. Francis uses a Teacher Academy as a pipeline of teacher leadership and as the cornerstone of its induction, mentoring, professional development, and compensation. Similarly, Plattsburgh uses teachers on the District Wide Educational Improvement Council to recommend changes in current education policies, discuss educational changes in the district prior to implementation, and provide for dialogue between the union, the administration and the board, allowing input by the professional staff on district-wide matters. Denver uses committees and focus groups of as many as 250 school leaders, teachers, parents, and students to facilitate reforms in teacher evaluation policy. The bargaining agreement also becomes a place to make an explicit policy commitment to shared projects that improve teaching and learning, such as the professional development initiatives being undertaken in Douglas County and St. Francis.

These new agreements often lead to the development of new organizational structures. Many of the districts employ joint central oversight bodies that serve to interpret policies and manage the execution of shared projects. In this way labor and management move past their traditional roles and take up a shared stake in the successful implementation of joint initiatives. New Haven created “reform tables” where teachers, principals, and other practitioners address broad ranging issues and concerns such as compensation, evaluation, student achievement, and career paths. These reform tables are places where all parties examine difficult issues, with the common understanding that those conversations will not replace or be used in the concurrent negotiations, but instead create open space for formative dialogue where solutions can be discussed before they become a proposal. Through these reform tables, New Haven extends the flexibility of their policies to provide higher achieving schools a higher level of individual school flexibility. Many of the collaborating districts take shared decision-making to a deeper level. They also report creating work groups or design teams with specific charges to develop and implement reform initiatives, such as evaluation pilots, professional development centers, career ladders, and performance measures.

These new structures, in turn, create innovative work processes. Many districts, such as Douglas County, Helena, and Montgomery County, share decision-making processes on instructional and professional development priorities. Districts with commitments to peer review, such as ABC Unified and Montgomery County, share the work of supporting struggling teachers. In Montgomery County, this includes determining if peer assistance has succeeded in improving teaching performance enough to retain a teacher in the district. A number of districts, including Baltimore, Denver, Green Dot, and Hillsborough County have worked jointly on high stakes federal or philanthropic grant competitions. The proposal drafting process leads to carefully crafted joint decisions and, when the proposal is successful, sometimes leads to shared ownership of administration of the grant. These new processes extend beyond the traditional limits of collective bargaining. They expand the scope of bargaining to educational issues, change the tone of bargaining from adversarial to collaborative, and use bargaining as an almost continuous process of shared decision-making focused ultimately on improving student learning.

Some districts are developing technology-based structures and processes to promote and support their joint efforts. Douglas County is developing hardware and software systems that will support their new evaluation and compensation systems. Hillsborough County is developing data systems as well as an assessment system that will provide the basis of a value-added system being developed by the University of Wisconsin. Additionally, Hillsborough uses a district e-mail box, Web site, daily pop-up e-mails from the superintendent, and short survey probes to disseminate and collect information.

The decision-making structures in these districts overlap with the processes to drive the labor-management relationship. Collective bargaining is viewed as a vehicle to improve student outcomes. For example, Green Dot negotiated a contract that does not structure the teacher workday around set hours. Teachers operate around a professional day. Their hours are not defined by the time of the day. Instead, teachers optimize their work schedule to best meet the needs of the students on a site-by-site basis. By centralizing some administrative tasks away from the campus, principals have more time to be instructional leaders with the Green Dot requirement of 50% of principal time spent in classrooms.

Finally, almost all of the collaborative districts report that underneath these formal structures and processes are powerful informal ones, usually shared among chief leaders. Some, like Hillsborough County report routine, even daily contact between the assistant superintendent and union president. These are close relationships that involve frequent phone calls and other communications. At this “table,” the partners report doing more than simply monitoring compliance to the contract or other policy; they work together developing strategies for success.

Knowledge, skills, and dispositions

The leaders in these 12 districts did more than develop new policies or organizational structures. They stepped out of traditional roles and were able to develop and put to use new knowledge, skills and dispositions to benefit students.

For many collaborating districts this work began with developing new knowledge and skills to conduct contract negotiations. Of several districts, Montgomery County is the most vocal champion of an “interest-based model,” an approach to negotiation that encourages local leaders to set aside traditional positional behavior and replace it with negotiation based on shared understanding of the goals and rationale each party brings to the table. Leaders in Helena evolved the interest-based model into what they call “consensus-based negotiations.” Plattsburgh’s approach rethinks the nature of administration and treats it as a set of tasks rather than a group of people on the other side of the table. This allows them to get past two-sided negotiations and toward joint problem solving.

Many districts report these new skills form a shared organizational foundation, which is used to build capacity to extend collaborative decision-making to central committees, work groups, dispute resolution processes, peer review panels, and other decision-making settings beyond the bargaining table. In short, it becomes a way of building organizational capacity. Labor relations are no longer conducted through periodic adversarial contract talks, but ongoing discussions about how to successfully meet goals and implement reforms. This develops new skills of delegation and builds systems for collaboration.

Many also made a point that they invested shared effort in learning about difficult policy matters together. Shared committees on subjects like performance-based compensation often begin with joint efforts to study the field. The

leaders point out that the shared learning experiences are as much about leveling the playing field as they are about developing specific shared knowledge. The informal value is that teacher and administration leaders become learners together as they explore the new ideas.

The leaders also emphasize the role other informal knowledge and skills play in their collaborative work. Leaders stress how important it is to know each other and their organizations. They often talk about their shared work as if it were diplomacy, and admit that they share an interest in helping to meet each other's organizational goals. They also recognize how important it is to know the members of their respective teams, especially when they begin building capacity by delegating work.

Ultimately collaboration does not replace hard work with harmony; rather it provides new avenues for hard work to get done, in spite of differences. In some districts, such as Baltimore, Douglas County, and Green Dot, the leaders report that the collaboration began with a crisis that proved that the old way of doing business was insufficient. In others, ranging from Denver to Hillsborough County and Montgomery County, they report sustaining collaboration through difficult disagreements.

Without exception, these district leaders cite frequent, honest, and transparent communication between administration and union as absolutely essential. Instead of making the budget process opaque, many of the boards and administrations have presented their budget challenges to teachers to attempt to creatively address budget shortfalls.

The boards, administrations, and unions also took these opportunities to ensure that their strategic priorities were aligned to ensure that essential personnel and programs were supported. Moreover, information is also collected and disseminated for formative feedback to facilitate shared decision-making. When severe budget cuts were necessary in ABC Unified over the past two years, the union proposed four furlough days to save \$6 million. No employees were given pink slips. The furlough included all employees, with the school board agreeing to take a proportionate reduction in their own stipends.

In the long run these collaborative efforts depended heavily on some basic dispositions. The collaborative leaders shared a commitment to each other and the success of their joint goals. They often spoke in sophisticated terms about giving each other "cover" to make difficult decisions, and allowing each other to "take credit" for critical parts of shared decisions. The leaders spoke easily about their commitment to improving student outcomes and the quality of the job of teaching. Many spoke in terms of a foundation in trust, but that the trust was grounded in on-going work. They also reported a shared commitment to transparency, not only about information relevant to traditional matters of contract negotiation, such as budgets, but more difficult matters, like performance measurement, even top-level decision-making. They also spoke of resilience and a willingness to bend in order not to break the collaboration. In this way, the collaboration becomes as much about joint problem solving and continuous improvement toward simple goals, as it is about specific policies and initiatives. More than anything, these dispositions serve to erase the bright line that exists between labor and management in more traditional relationships, and forge new bonds around shared outcomes.

Conclusion

In his closing remarks at the Labor-Management Conference, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recognized the problem of scale and called for the leaders in the room to build a movement. There are 15,000 school districts. If, as a nation, we are to improve the achievement of all students and close the persistent gaps between lower and higher performing students, district leaders, board members, and teacher union leaders will need to work together toward those shared goals.

We hope these case studies will stimulate and inform conversation. One of our purposes is to describe the work of districts known for making early headway in the field. By so doing, more districts will be able to take up a more collaborative approach. Another purpose of these case studies is to demonstrate to leaders who do not sit at the local labor-management table, what is being done across the country, so they can consider how to encourage and accelerate this movement.

Conditions could not be more challenging. Schools are pressed to prepare productive 21st century citizens, while facing shrinking state and local budgets. But, as many of the leaders in the collaborative districts assert, they began their shared effort to address a crisis. In response, they developed new ways of doing business and attained new, more ambitious results. The value of these case studies may be, then, to galvanize all involved to move from islands of innovation to sweeping systemic improvement.

ABC Unified School District, California

Context

The seeds of [ABC Unified School District](#)'s labor management cooperation with the [ABC Federation of Teachers](#) (ABCFT) took root in 1993 during an eight-day teacher strike over pay, benefits, and class size. After the strike, union president [Laura Rico](#) took steps to increase collaboration between district administrators and union leaders. In addition, the union began to campaign for board members supportive of labor management collaboration. Between 1993 and 1999, the district went through eight superintendents, and the composition of the school board evolved to become one that understood and supported labor-management collaboration. In 1999, Superintendent Ron Barnes was hired. He and Rico agreed that an adversarial district-union relationship had negative effects on student achievement and teacher effectiveness, and by collaborating, everyone would benefit.

Also in 1999, a small group of district administrators, school board members, ABCFT executive board members and presidents of two other district unions attended a week-long Harvard University seminar on labor-management collaboration in public schools. The seminar provided a theoretical basis for the Partnership, ABC's formal name for their collaboration, and focused their efforts. After the seminar, Barnes and Rico established weekly, confidential meetings where they discussed obstacles to student achievement. They agreed that issues best left for the bargaining table such as salaries, benefits, and transfers would not be topics of their meetings; instead, they would discuss issues impeding student achievement and teaching effectiveness and search for collaborative solutions.

In 2005, current superintendent, [Gary Smuts](#) was hired to replace the retiring Barnes. He continued and expanded collaboration with the union to strengthen teacher recruitment and retention. Additionally, he and the union funded teacher-selected, school-specific, research-based instructional programs to improve student achievement.

The Partnership has these Guiding Principles:

1. All students can succeed and we will not accept any excuse that prevents that from happening in ABC. We will work together to promote student success.
2. All needed support will be made available to schools to ensure every student succeeds. We will work together to ensure that happens.
3. The top 5% of teachers in our profession should teach our students. We will work together to hire, train, and retain these professionals.
4. All employees contribute to student success.
5. The basis of all negotiations and decisions is that they must support conditions that sustain successful teaching and student learning.
6. We won't let each other fail!

Understanding that they were establishing innovative relationships, Rico and Smuts also established Guiding Principles - Behaviors:

- We will work hard to understand the core of each other's job.
- We will respect each other.
- We will be honest with each other.
- We will not "sugar coat" difficult issues.
- We will disagree without being disagreeable.
- We will reflect on each other's comments, suggestions, and concerns.
- We will seek clarification until we understand.
- We will maintain confidentiality.
- We will both "own the contract."
- We will solve problems rather than win arguments.
- We will laugh at ourselves and with each other.

Rather than change the union contract, the union and district rely upon these guiding principles. These dispositional guiding principles are essential to driving and sustaining district success. Smuts states, "Student achievement is the bottom line. We won't let anyone fail, not students, teachers, or administrators." However, the district does not necessarily operationalize some of these guiding principles that seem to be empirical. When pressed on how the district identifies the "top five percent" of teachers, district leaders acknowledge that this is "metaphorical" and is not actually defined.

Transparency is important. Smuts states, "We don't fight over money. We don't have any to fight over, but everyone knows where it's being spent." Following a philosophy of integrating labor and management roles, union representatives are appointed as liaisons to district departments, are represented on district committees, and participate in education and budget decisions.

Strategic Priorities

The district's 2010-2013 Strategic Plan states:

- We believe students in ABC should be as well educated as any in the world.
- We believe all students have the capacity to be high achievers.
- We believe people are the cornerstone of our district and students are the reason we are here.

As a result, ABCUSD sends more money per student to its schools than surrounding districts (local comparison of school site budgets for four surrounding districts) even though the district ranks 43rd out 47 L.A. County unified school districts in base revenue limit (Los Angeles County Office of Education Annual Financial Report). In addition, their student/teacher ratio of 24/1 elementary and 26/1 secondary is lower than California's designated limit.

Schools are expected to create their own pockets of success. An example of this is when teachers and leaders at [Fedde Middle School](#) decided to apply for a [School Improvement Grant](#) (SIG). Rico met with them and said, "'O.K. teachers, what do you need? How do you think this SIG money is going to help you?'... We could not make it about the money ... The incentive part [teacher pay for performance] didn't actually come until the very end of negotiations. They saw the SIG thing as not punitive ... They were willing to take the risk about student data because of the Partnership." Smuts added, "I think if a school wants to volunteer to do that, I wouldn't stop them. That's sort of a habit in our district. And if they adopt a good idea and that school's successful... everybody is going to want to do that."

ABC Unified values its teachers and focuses on keeping people employed with benefits intact. When severe budget cuts were necessary over the past two years, the union proposed four furlough days to save \$6 million. No employees were given pink slips. The furlough included all employees, with the school board agreeing to take a proportionate reduction in their own stipends. Moreover, the Partnership believes that schools and teachers best understand the types of professional development needed. Teachers select professional development in areas such as leadership development, data analysis, team building, community involvement, and delivery of effective instruction. The previous school board president acknowledges that the district has always respected teachers' abilities to understand what is needed to effectively deliver instruction and that, if a district wants meaningful professional development, it must trust teachers to make those decisions.

System Infrastructure

According to the administration, board, and union leadership, the union contract language has not changed significantly since inception of the Partnership, but the Partnership has gained strength and acceptance because collaborative decision-making and funding have changed the culture of the district. Teachers are valued as professional decision-making partners to improve student achievement. The school board and union leadership formally adopted a [Charter Statement](#) on June 2, 2009. Through the Guiding Principles and the Charter Statement, the Partnership has been institutionalized.

On a programmatic level, the Partnership instituted the [Peer Assistance and Support System](#) (PASS) nearly a decade ago to ensure that new teachers, as well as veteran teachers needing assistance, receive support. As part of PASS, peer coaches use the [California Standards for the Teaching Profession](#) and [grade level content standards](#) to provide feedback to teachers after visiting classrooms and conducting pre- and post-observation meetings with the principal. The peer coach, participating teacher, and principal form the Professional Support Team to implement teaching and learning goals established in the school's Professional Support Plan. If, after receiving support from PASS, a teacher is still not effective, the union counsels them out of the district. If a principal is not working effectively to close the achievement gap after receiving support from the district, then district administration counsels the principal out.

Communication has been an essential component of the Partnership. Every year since 1999, union and management have attended AFT's Partnership Administration and Labor Retreats, where union representatives, supervisors, and principals work with Rutgers' Dr. Saul Rubinstein to discuss school initiatives and to learn collaborative methods to achieve their goals. To collect evidence about effectiveness of the Partnership, the union solicits yearly feedback from all district employees. Issues made visible through this feedback are addressed during through Partnership activities. Additionally, the district developed a communication system to facilitate relationships between labor and management. Smuts' and Rico's weekly two-hour closed-door meetings focus on finding resources to fund school initiatives and programs. District administrators in most departments communicate regularly with their union liaisons, and union leaders sit on important district committees. The union and the district sponsor an annual retreat for union and district leaders resulting in a strategic plan with specific yearly targets for high standards, parent and community partnerships, professional development, safe and nurturing schools, and facility modernization.

Founded in past success, the Partnership believes that the best way to build collaborative capacity is to focus on school projects to improve student achievement. At the Harvard University seminar in 1999, members of the Partnership defined areas for collaboration and identified that schools on the south side of the district, an area of high poverty with many English language learners and special education students, needed help with reading. Management and labor visited programs and then, working with teachers from the south side, created the [South-Side Schools Reading Collaborative](#) (SSSRC). Through district- and union-funded peer coaching, full-day reading conferences, and community partnerships, teachers continue to improve instructional strategies and materials to help children reach high academic standards. Since 2000, schools in the SSSRC have posted the greatest student achievement growth in the district. The collaborative culture of these schools has transformed the district. In 2002, the California School Boards Association recognized SSSRC with the Golden Bell Award as an outstanding district program in California.

Sustaining Factors

[Celia Spitzer](#), a former school board president, says that an effective partnership must have three legs: stability, strength, and support. A high level of stability has been present in ABC Unified since 2001. Rico has been active in ABCFT for 30 years; Smuts has worked in the district as a teacher and administrator for over 30 years; and the school board has remained stable with few new members. Spitzer says that new board members, seeing how other members work collaboratively with union and district leaders, realize that to succeed they need to work collaboratively because it works. Spitzer says strength comes from working with the union to elect and hire people with knowledge of the district, who have had involvement in schools, who understand policy, fiscal matters, the strategic plan, how classrooms work, and how the board works. Support comes from board members who believe that collaboration between labor and management is critical, as is the hiring of principals and other administrators willing to participate fully in the Partnership. In addition, the Board's annual evaluation of the superintendent includes progress on the district's strategic plan.

Though the Partnership has proven successful at the district level and in some schools, all agree it is a work in progress at most school sites. The Partnership's vision is that building representatives will function as partnership managers and problem solvers in collaborative efforts similar to those at the district level. However, teachers serving as union representatives often feel uncomfortable functioning as managers, and some administrators are reluctant to share decision-making with labor. To overcome this resistance, the Partnership is developing site partnerships by working with [AFT's Innovation Fund](#) to establish individual schools as laboratories for innovation. Twenty-one schools have received

funds and are participating in AFT's national institutes to nurture labor-management cooperation. There is also a two-year orientation for new principals on the attributes of using partnerships.

Leadership agrees that the Partnership is still evolving. They do not agree about everything, but continue to work toward common goals. Their successes have encouraged other district unions to initiate partnerships with management. They also state that by not having to spend time and resources on labor-management disputes, they have more to spend on teachers and students. Smuts says that all partners must be willing to prioritize student learning. Despite continued concerns about decreased funding, because students continue to achieve, morale remains high. Rico agrees, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Baltimore Public Schools, Maryland

Context

In many respects, [Baltimore City Public Schools](#) (City Schools) is a unique district. Governed by a city-state partnership, City Schools has a 9-member Board of School Commissioners jointly appointed by the mayor of the city and the state's governor. This structure has existed only since 1997, when City Schools separated from the Baltimore City Government and agreed to cede partial control to the state in exchange for increased funding. Another unique feature of City Schools is that its teacher union is the only one in the state affiliated with the [American Federation of Teachers](#). There has been a revolving door of CEOs for City Schools, and the current [Baltimore Teachers Union](#) (BTU) president, Marietta English, has been through seven CEOs in ten years. She describes a lack of trust, or broken trust, between the BTU and the previous set of CEOs prior to the arrival of the current CEO, Andrés Alonso.

Alonso joined the district in July of 2007, as the union and district were reaching an impasse in negotiations. Over the last three years, Alonso, along with his team of administrators, has worked to rebuild the trust and maintain a collaborative and working relationship with teachers and the BTU. He and English joke about the various informal dinners that have been had in order to learn about each other, build trust, and talk through difficult issues, because the "relationship is worth saving," says English. Having learned various lessons from the last round of negotiations that resulted in an impasse, both labor and management in City Schools realized that it is a relationship built on trust that would result in a successful negotiation. Both sides entered negotiations with the mindset and willingness to continue the conversation until an agreement was reached by exploring areas of agreements and all possible options. This, they say, was one of the biggest lessons learned from the impasse. While "we were definitive on the broad elements and end goals" says Dr. Alonso, "there was no 'take it or leave it' stance on the elements" by either party. They assert that the district was also a center of innovation anticipating federal funds through the Race to the Top grant and new state requirements focusing on improving outcomes and engaging teachers in the process. The BTU and City Schools also began the negotiations amidst a few years of economic recession that resulted in two years of salary freezes for teachers and administrators. Before negotiations, both sides agreed on some common expectations and non-negotiables. All members of the negotiation team agree to:

- emphasize the professionalization of teaching,
- ensure fiscal sustainability,
- negotiate for the entire membership without any pilots,
- concentrate on the big ideas and leave the details to be later determined,
- collaborate for as long as necessary to not go to impasse, and
- not communicate with media or public until negotiation ended.

Although Alonso participated in setting the group norms and expectations, he did not actually participate in the negotiation process, but made one appearance at a critical point when the team seemed to be headed towards an impasse.

Strategic Priorities

City Schools' vision is that *every student will graduate ready to achieve excellence in higher education and the global workforce*. According to Maryland's Race to the Top application, 50% of teachers' evaluation will be tied to student outcomes, and tenure will be granted after three years instead of two. However, there is still debate in the state about the percentage of a teacher's evaluation that can be tied to student outcomes. A state Educator Effectiveness Council, composed mainly of educators, was created to decide on a "framework" and the details of the state's evaluation system. The goal is for the new system to go into effect for the 2012-2013 school year. There were many moving parts in Maryland as the team negotiated, which led to the negotiation resulting in a broad framework of policies, processes, and structures that are vehicles for continuing the work of determining the details. "We made an early decision," Alonso explained, "that what was most important was the big lever, and we were not going to get into the weeds, and the people [i.e. teachers] who were going to be affected by this need to be the ones who negotiated the weeds." While the union wanted to give teachers greater control over their careers as well as opportunity to climb career ladders that led to increased compensation, the district wanted to recruit, retain, and grow the best teachers and be fiscally responsible. Because the teachers in City Schools had gone for two years without a raise, they saw this negotiation as an opportunity to request increased compensation.

System Infrastructure

The [contract](#) negotiated in November included structures to ensure that there is continued shared decision-making and problem solving in City Schools. First, the contract eliminated salary increases based solely on advanced degrees, and created career pathways for teachers, including four paths for teachers with differentiated compensation. One of the contentious issues was how current teachers would be placed into each pathway, and the team agreed to include earned advanced degrees and years of experience in determining placement, as well as the history of teachers' evaluation results. For example, a teacher with a Master's degree and 10 years of experience would only be placed in the Model pathway if he or she has also had two years of proficient, not just satisfactory, evaluations (See Figure 1). This pleased both sides that determined the compromise fair. This grandfathered placement is for the initial transition and would be effective for only three years. Other teachers can move pathways based on presenting documentation of being a highly effective teacher to a peer review panel twice a year. Although the district has flexibility in identifying the elements of professional practice factoring into evaluations, half of a teacher's evaluation will still include student growth data, per state law.

Figure 1: City Schools Career Pathways



There are checks and balances built into the contract that assure teachers that decisions will include teacher representation in decision making. This is the "collaborative frame" that Alonso hopes will help in "working through the uncertainties" and unanswered details in the contract. He also likes the notion of "eventually leading towards responsibility [and autonomy] at the school level." Because these committees are comprised of teachers, with union appointment, it was deemed fair (See Figure 2). The Joint Oversight Committee, for example will:

- Define the full scope and objectives of the Baltimore Professional Practices and Student Learning Program.
- Assess the school district's needs for student programs and the capacity of the professional staff to meet those needs.

- Identify educational and professional activities in which staff needs to be engaged, and evaluated for effectiveness; this serves as a basis for compensation decisions.
- Create and oversee a system of ensuring reliability and validity of teacher and staff evaluations conducted by principals.
- Create and oversee the process to select members to the Professional Peer Review Committee, designate its responsibilities, and provide general operating oversight of its work.

Figure 2: City Schools Contract Committees Structures



Recognizing that schools *should* be different from one another and that they should have flexibility to operate, a “school-based” option was written into the contract, giving flexibility to schools to modify the collective bargaining agreement to better meet the needs of students and the school community. Since City Schools has a large number of students in charter schools or schools working with external partner organizations, this option allows the school community to collaboratively craft creative solutions specific to their individual school’s needs, as long as 80% of a school’s staff approves of the school-based options. Although the CEO or the union president can veto a school’s decision, this allows greater flexibility for school leaders and staff by decentralizing decision-making.

Sustaining Factors

One key element that has made City Schools’ labor and union relationship successful is the willingness of both sides to collaborate. They point to staying connected through constant conversation without making things personal. When the contract was not ratified the first time, both sides of the negotiation team felt responsible because throughout the eight months, they “had become partners in the work,” said Alonso. They saw that the teachers questioned the fairness of the evaluation system, so they built language into the contract to ensure reliability and also addressed how to incorporate the existing structure into the new system. The details were not determined through the contract, but left to the committees to work out. The team admitted to not giving enough time to communicate with teachers about its content.

Transparency is another key factor. In order to achieve the trust, the district decided to “open the books” willingly, Alonso says, and allow for the union leadership team to validate the information and understand the fiscal condition of the district. The second time around, teachers ratified the contract, because their concerns were addressed and because time was allotted to communicate details of the contract to them.

The City Schools labor and management collaboration resulted in the establishment of necessary structures and processes integral to the success of the district. The structures, like the committees, allow for ongoing discussion and tweaking of the details to ensure a fair and reasonable set of policies for student success. Maryland has yet to develop its teacher evaluation system, and those decisions in shifting the statewide framework will have a direct impact on City Schools decisions. This poses a challenge as City Schools stays proactive in moving forward rapidly with reforms, while awaiting direction from the state.

Denver Public Schools, Colorado

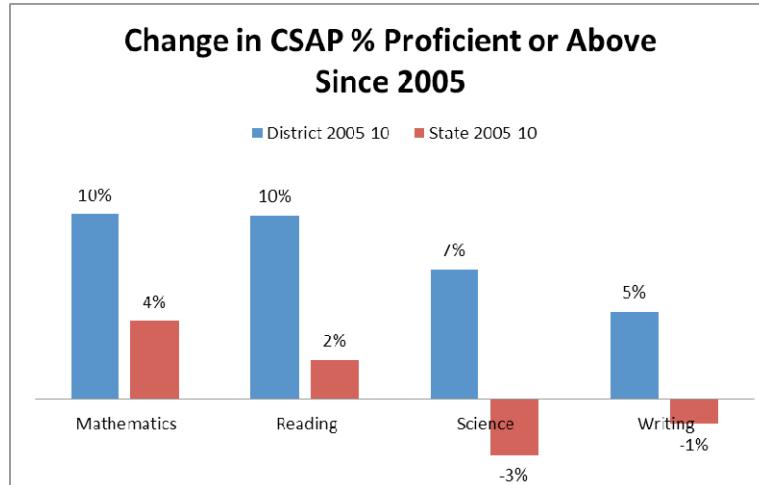
Context

Successful students come from excellent teachers, teaching in excellent schools, led by excellent school leaders. This premise guides the work of [Denver Public Schools](#) (DPS), the Denver Classroom Teacher's Association (DCTA), and is supported by the school board. The current collaboration between DPS and DCTA is based upon the foundation established by their four-year effort to create a new teacher compensation system. After the school board expressed interest in performance-based compensation, the union and district launched a pilot effort, resulting from negotiations in 1999. In 2005, [ProComp](#) was approved by voters, and fully implemented. In the words of Superintendent Tom Boasberg, "If we can come together and jointly agree on something, we'll have a much better chance of having public support."

While it is difficult to draw a direct correlation, much less causality, between the implementation of the ProComp system and student achievement, results of a recent University of Colorado study indicate that as a result of implementing ProComp Denver is recruiting higher quality teachers in the district, teachers in their first two years are doing better than they were before ProComp, and teacher turnover has been dramatically reduced. As Tom Boasberg, Superintendent observed, "The mere presence of incentives did not materialize in the form of in better results for students, but helped retain those teachers who were getting the good results."

Recently, Denver celebrated a 42% reduction in the dropout rate since 2006. Further illustrating their success is their students' improved scores on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Change in CSAP proficiency since 2005



The shared belief that improving student achievement relies upon excellent teachers and excellent school leaders is embedded in the teacher and principal evaluation pilot, Leading Effective Academic Practice ([LEAP](#)). LEAP is supported by a \$10 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The grant extends the collaboration begun by DPS and DCTA to reform teacher evaluation by supporting the development of a shared, research-driving definition of effective teaching; development of a tool/framework to assess teacher performance; implementation of targeted professional development; and alignment of current salary policies with compensation that supports effective teaching. These efforts will be informed by the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) research study.

Strategic Priorities

The strategic priorities for the district are synthesized in [The Denver Plan](#) and in LEAP. The goals set forth in the Denver Plan include:

1. Every student taught by an excellent teacher, and every school led by an excellent principal;
2. Clear understanding of characteristics of effectiveness and the commitment to provide regular feedback against these standards;
3. Providing tools, resources, and support to teachers and principals in pursuit of perfecting their craft;
4. Rewarding excellent teachers.

The current work reforming teacher evaluation grew from The Denver Plan. LEAP will provide a framework for teacher and principal evaluation that, as Tom Boasberg describes “provides teachers with additional feedback and support, so they can continue to learn and grow professionally.”

LEAP incorporates multiple measures including familiar data such as principal observation, peer observer observation and includes professional contributions, called “Collaborative Professionalism/Contributions to Team & School.” The framework also includes student outcomes (50% as set by the recently passed Colorado Senate Bill 191) and student perception data. Since the design work is still in its infancy, the component of student outcomes has not yet been finalized. Measures of student outcomes will include multiple sources of data, growth and status, summative and formative assessments. The student perception component is also still in development and will include student perception surveys that will be developed based on the research findings from the Gates funded [Measures of Effective Teaching](#) (MET) project. The intent of the student perception tool is to provide teachers with effective feedback and to ensure that evaluation will be connected to a feedback loop.

While not specifically addressed in The Denver Plan, the collaboration between district and union emerged as a priority. The journey that yielded ProComp set the stage for the theoretical notions of collaboration as well as the vehicles and language. As Carolyn Crowder, Executive Director of Colorado Teacher’s Association shared, “We believe the challenges out there are too big without collaboration... when we fail to collaborate, we basically fail to solve the problem.” The ability to approach the collaboration as a dialogue assisted Denver in overcoming a potential pitfall to the grant application. When the district first approached the union to sign off, DCTA declined since they did not feel the goals would be achieved by only reforming teacher evaluation. The union was firm in their desire to have principal evaluation also be part of the plan. After a dialogue, the district agreed, and the grant application was approved.

System Infrastructure

LEAP relies upon structures supported by grant funding: focus groups, design teams and pilot schools. Each of these structures involves a wide array of stakeholders. The focus groups engaged over 250 school leaders, teachers, parents and students to provide input and on-going feedback to inform the design of DPS’ teacher performance assessment system. The design teams are co-chaired by a teacher and a school leader, and include 45 school leaders and teachers to create definition of content areas such as the observation rubric, peer observers, student assessments, professional development and principal effectiveness. To promote equity and ensure readiness and faculty support, DPS offered an application process for schools to participate in piloting the evaluation tool. This spring, 16 schools will pilot the framework developed by the design teams. Teachers in these pilot schools will receive ‘satisfactory’ ratings on their evaluation and the data collected from the pilot year will not influence future evaluations.

Decentralization of both finances and decision-making support the belief that systems closest to the students should be empowered with the resources necessary to support students: 95% of the funds the district receives from the state go directly to the school buildings, with only 5% retained by the district to cover central office programs and offices. Decisions that directly affect the teachers and students are made at the schools through their School Leadership Team and are guided by their School Improvement Plan; the process of teacher involvement in decision-making is outlined in the contract established through collective bargaining. In order to ratify the contract, every DCTA member must vote – not just those in attendance at the meeting. The contract ensures transparency and promotes trust and communication because it establishes teacher involvement in the decision-making process, and outlines feedback loops. The contract negotiates the ‘how’ with buildings in partnership with the union charged to determine the ‘what’ of their work. As noted by DCTA President Henry Roman, “Our contract supplies the structures, but it still depends on the people involved.”

The use of data and dialogue to make decisions provides another example of collaborative practice between DPS and DCTA. Recently DCTA approached the district with concern about principals not consistently being respected by their teachers, and requested to administer a survey to its membership. The district at first resisted, but ultimately collaborated with the union to develop and administer the survey. Regarding the use of data from this survey, Tom Boasberg remarks “Along with student achievement data, this is the single most important piece of data that I look at.”

Challenges

Limited funds and a rapidly changing demographic are challenges for DPS. Between 1985 and 2005, the Latino population in DPS increased 111%. While there is much to celebrate in the district’s improvement around student achievement, the school board, union, and district recognize that the data also points to a significant achievement gap between various ethnic groups. As noted by Nate Easley, President of the Denver School Board, “What we did yesterday doesn’t give us a solution for tomorrow.” The Denver Plan refocused their work, and the union and district collaboratively undertook LEAP to help consistently improve outcomes for all students.

The collaborative foundation established by their work on ProComp continues to require DPS and DCTA to engage in on-going dialogue. DCTA and DPS continue to work through obstacles that arise in ProComp, including the structure and timing of the payouts. Three years into the implementation, the district made changes in the elements of ProComp. Though the implementation moved forward, the current collaboration has inherited this challenge. Carolyn Crowder, the Executive Director of Colorado Teacher’s Association, noted that during this process of implementing a new teacher evaluation process, “[DCTA] had to convince them [teachers] that the district isn’t going to pull the rug out from under them.” Henry Roman, President of DCTA, further observed, “perception is reality, whether it is reality or not.”

Recently, six of the district schools were in turnaround. The process the district administered was met with criticism from teachers who did not feel sufficiently involved in the process. After the decisions were made around turnaround were made, the district, union and school board met to talk about how to make the process better next time. As Carolyn Crowder noted, “If we don’t show we have collaboration in this area [turnaround], then the collaboration in all areas isn’t authentic.”

An additional challenge is the still undefined impact of Senate Bill 191. All members of the leadership in the district are concerned about the unintended consequences of this public policy, and are working to contend with the non-negotiables set by the state legislature, especially the provision requiring that student assessment data must count for 50% of the evaluation. The design team tasked with developing this component is struggling to make this fair without existing models in Colorado from which to draw upon. The pilot of the teacher evaluation framework this spring will not include this component because, at present, the team does not have the expertise to figure out how to meet this expectation in a fair and equitable manner that can be clearly communicated in the framework and consistently applied.

Sustaining Factors

The history of successful collaboration, a strong desire to collaborate, and structures to promote investment of all stakeholders has accounted for the productive labor-management relationship. The vision for the collaborative work lives in public documents and in established practices, and does not rely solely upon the personality or capacity of those in leadership. As Henry Roman, DCTA President, quipped, “[Our collaboration] is like a marriage, and like any relationship needs attention and quality time.”

Both the superintendent and union president were new in 2009; however, both had been deeply involved in the development of ProComp prior to attaining their current positions. Both Superintendent Tom Boasberg and President Henry Roman credit the involvement of teachers with carrying the work forward, and feel that the work would be sustained through a change in leadership. An example of teacher involvement to sustain the work is the ProComp Transition Team. Since 2005, a group of teachers with union leadership formed a transition team to help with the implementation of ProComp. This team continues to meet on a regular basis with Henry Roman to address challenges presented by the ProComp system.

Denver’s biggest challenges may yet lie ahead. With SB 191 pushing the teacher evaluation to be based primarily on student outcome measures, DPS and DCTA are working to develop a fair evaluation system that is in compliance. The

stakes continue to increase, because as the overall test results improve, a comparison of achievement among ethnic groups shows a growing achievement gap. While the collaboration has already survived a change in leadership, the next year will be a contract year for Denver. In financially challenging times and with SB 191 in place, the collaborative culture could be tested.

Douglas County Public Schools, Colorado

Context

The [Douglas County School District](#) (DCSD) and [Douglas County Federation of Teachers](#) (DCFTT) innovative and collaborative partnership dates back over two decades. These efforts began in the early 1990's when DCSD developed one of our country's first models of pay-for-performance. In 1995 [Rob Weil](#), a 20-year-veteran high school teacher, was elected DCFT union president. Weil currently serves as Deputy Director of the National American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Current DCFT President Brenda Smith has been a teacher in DCSD since 1992. She knows the ongoing DCSD growth challenge first-hand through the perspective of her first classroom, "I began with 16 students and ended the school year with 32 students." District leadership has been consistent with only three superintendents in fifty years. [Dr. Elizabeth Celania-Fagen](#) is in her first year as DCSD superintendent. Another recent leadership change occurred on the DSCD [Board of Education](#). In November 2009, three new members were elected to a seven-member school board by narrow margins. All board members have advanced college degrees and work experiences that include positions in real estate, investment advising, economics, the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. State Department, the White House, and senior advising to a U.S. Senator.

DCSD/DCFT is focused on building collaborative relationships based on trust. This was evident in presentations and interviews conducted during the [Labor-Management Collaboration Conference](#). At the conference, DCFT President, Brenda Smith shared,

How do you build this relationship of collaboration for student success? First and foremost, you need to understand that our district has really focused in on relationship building. We, as an organization, as a teacher's voice, are always at the table talking about what's next so there're no surprises. We have not filed a grievance in over six years. We typically make a phone call prior to a grievance and solve issues through dialogue and open communication. Part of this comes from building relationships, getting to know whom you're dealing with inside the system and when there are problems, solving them very quickly.

Board of Education Vice-President, Dan Gerken, agrees and adds, "Seriously, some of this stuff is fairly obvious, but Brenda and I grab coffee often and we have an ethic that we agree to disagree. We don't keep smaller disagreements from getting in the way of the big picture."

Parent, Kevin Larson discussed the importance of trust in an innovative district. He stated, "If people don't feel there is trust between the leadership and the front line, when in doubt, with loss in communication, you assume the worst. What must happen is lots of communication. Then, when you don't know all the details, you assume the best is actually occurring, and the energy is spent getting innovations implemented."

Strategic Priorities

The [pay-for-performance plan](#) was created in 1992 and incorporated two distinct components: a base salary structure and bonus incentive awards. The program was developed in 6,000 hours, during a nine-month period, to build consensus on a final plan that was approved by 80% of DCSD teachers. Today, DCSD/DCFT is working to align the pay-for-performance plan with teacher compensation and evaluation. [Continuous Improvement of Teacher Effectiveness \(CITE\)](#) is the current DCSD evaluation initiative. The goal is to make teacher evaluation less subjective, more reflective, and supportive of teachers perfecting their craft through [professional development](#). CITE is based on 21 professional characteristics of teacher effectiveness in three general categories: Student Achievement and Growth Expectations (primary), Differentiated Performance Expectations (secondary), and Basic Compliance Expectations (tertiary).

DCFT President Brenda Smith recalled the development of the pay-for-performance plan as a classic case of “putting the cart before the horse.” In 1992, the pay-for-performance plan was developed separately from the salary schedule, as well as the evaluation and professional development plan. With CITE, DCSD is bringing together over 200 of the original teachers and administrators who worked on the pay-for-performance plan with new teachers to align the existing plan with compensation, evaluation, and professional development. This is anticipated to be a three to four year process, first building an evaluation system, and then improving the performance pay system, while simultaneously enhancing the professional development program.

DCSD has also developed an [alternative licensure program](#) in order to meet the ongoing challenge of rapid enrollment growth. According to National Center for Education Statistics, DCSD is the fastest growing district in the country. From 1998-2008, Douglas County grew 427.3%. DCSD must hire hundreds of teachers every year. DSCD presented a proposal to the Colorado State Board of Education to streamline the state's current teacher licensure and endorsement procedures in an effort to better serve students. Waivers to current processes allow the district to create its own Professional in Resident (PiR) program to help high-level industry professionals—like local aeronautical engineers, foreign language instructors, and nuclear physicists to qualify to teach Douglas County students on a part-time basis. Additionally, the district would have the ability to fill hard-to-staff positions like special education, technology education, mathematics, science and vocational/technical education, by providing additional training for qualified licensed teachers.

System Infrastructure

The DCSD [contract](#), a “living contract” represents the primary focus of adopting what’s best for students as the shared value for any specific proposal advanced by either the district or the DCFT as stated on page one. This includes school flexibility to utilize a 21st Century Waiver Agreement to do things outside of the contract. Examples of such waivers include, increasing student loads or determining the specifics of planning and collaboration time.

Feedback loops are built into the district infrastructure to ensure accurate and timely communication with an ongoing opportunity for feedback. One example is the [CITE Web site](#) that is at the core of developing teacher evaluation. Also important are opportunities for critical conversations. In describing the collaborative process, teacher Kim Herman says, “I think the process is a good one, there are lots of conversations, we are really digging deep to define what effective teaching is. All voices in the room are valued and ultimately the end result will be something that we can all trust.”

Board of Education Vice-President, Dan Gerken discusses the challenges of infrastructure to insure the CITE evaluation system is “done right.” The challenges include hardware and software costs to create a sophisticated, state of the art system. Another challenge is developing a system that teachers and the public believe is a valid system. Gerken shares that there is support to push teacher salaries up to at least \$100,000. While he believes that seniority is usually an indicator of increased teaching ability, Gerken recognizes the importance for gaining public support for higher teaching salaries by developing a valid evaluation system rather than just resting on the assumption that more years of service equates to better teachers.

Sustaining Factors

The [DCFT constitution](#) includes a focus on student and community, and utilizing a democratic process. Two of six sections are focused on students. Section Five focuses on promoting “a democratic environment in the schools and work sites to enable students to find their places in the industrial, social and political life of the community.” Three examples of utilizing the democratic process were evident during the Labor-Management Collaboration conference presentations.

First, in a [conversation](#) between U.S. Department of Education, Senior Education Advisor, Brad Jupp and alternative high school senior Annie, student involvement in hiring teachers at [Daniel C. Oakes High School](#) was discussed. When asked whether Oakes High could work without teacher buy-in to the school model, Annie replied,

It wouldn’t work at all because the students interview the teachers first. Then that teacher meets the staff and gets interviewed. We fill out a survey and give it to the staff and tell them what we think about the teacher we just interviewed. If we get a teacher who comes in who just wants to go by the rules, which is fine, but doesn’t

reach out to kids, it's not going to work. We need people who have the energy to teach the students and actually educate them, not just give them a test, a grade, and go home. It's amazing that we have the choice to pick which teacher we want to work with.

In a subsequent example, resource teacher, Kim Herman from Northeast Elementary School, shared her motivation for participating in the CITE committee,

It's the fact that I'm ABLE to. This is something that is not being done to us . . . Our district asked for teachers to join a room where administrators, district leaders, union representatives, and national union leaders were gathered. It didn't feel like a district committee. It was invigorating. It was about helping education and figuring out how to do things better.

And finally, Superintendent Celania-Fagen describes the challenge of [Colorado Senate Bill 191](#) and the CITE initiative. She stated,

Colorado has worked to maintain a fair amount of local control. I think a lot of the innovation you see in Douglas County is a result of having the opportunity to do these things. A great example is we have CITE moving forward with 21 indicators of teacher effectiveness, full speed ahead, down the track, and all of a sudden now we have the state coming out with teacher standards. In some states you would have to start over and you'd have to make those state standards your indicators; but our union president, Brenda Smith worked with the legislature and others to make sure that if our CITE system is better, or equal to, whatever the state comes up with, we can be waived out of the state system.

DCSD is attempting to provide a world class education through their commitments to school choice and assessment of system performance. The district is not only examining student outcomes but also how they are going to teach students who are digital natives. They are asking questions about how to engage students in the world in which they are and will be living. They are analyzing how all of this works within a system. Superintendent Celania-Fagen said,

Since about 2002 we've allowed external forces to define what's good in education. We're changing that. In Douglas County our bumper sticker reads, 'We are going to authentically assess that which matters most'. And we're going to decide what matters most for our students, our teachers, our schools, our district, and for our leaders. And then we're going to assess those things authentically and share those results with our community and all our stakeholders.

Green Dot Public Schools, California

Context

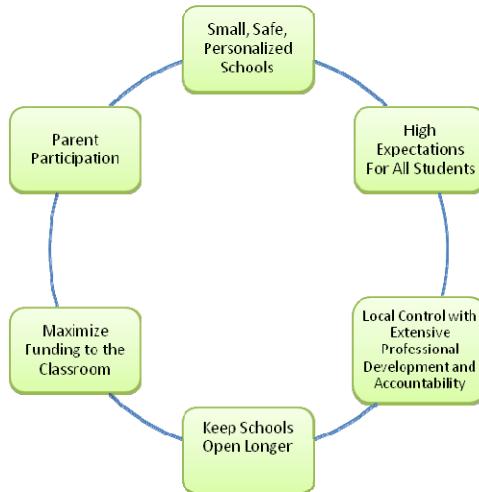
[Green Dot Public Schools](#) is a charter management organization (CMO) founded in 1999 as a response to dismal student achievement results in Los Angeles. The current CEO, Marco Petrucci joined Green Dot in 2007 and took over operations as President and Chief Executive Officer in 2008. Also in 2008, [Green Dot New York Charter School](#) opened for a small group of ninth grade students in the Bronx.

Operating 17 high schools in the Los Angeles area and one middle school, Green Dot's history is one that starts with a drive to improve academic growth in struggling or impoverished communities in Los Angeles. Consistently, Los Angeles Green Dot schools outperform comparable Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) sites on the California Standardized Test, the California High School Exit Exam, and college eligibility. In 2007, Green Dot took on the task of turning around one of the city's largest and lowest performing schools. The Locke Transformation Project, seen by the district as an "unprecedented challenge," signaled one of the largest projects by a CMO to date. Transforming Alain Leroy Locke High School in South Central Angeles into eight smaller high schools, Green Dot sought to demonstrate a direct response to lackluster results from LAUSD. Thus far, Green Dot's work at Locke has significantly improved campus safety, attendance and retention of students and academic achievement is also showing improvement, although Green Dot acknowledges that there is still a long way to go to achieve true college-readiness for the majority of students there.

Strategic Priorities

Green Dot's theory of academic success is identified in its six tenets (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Green Dot's Six Tenets of High Performing Schools:



These tenets are made explicit to parents, students, and the instructional community of Green Dot schools and drive every significant structural and strategic effort. Though they appear to be general concepts, they have sweeping labor consequences that rethink contractual obligations and expectations of educators at every level of the Green Dot school system. For instance, though there is acknowledged flexibility in parental participation, Green Dot asks parents to contribute 35 hours of time per year at their child's school. Moreover, Green Dot helped create the Los Angeles Parent Union, a grassroots organization that empowers parents at historically low-performing schools to advocate for equity and change. In their efforts to advocate for student needs, these parents are aligned with Green Dot's mission. From this shared mission, the [Parent Revolution](#) in Los Angeles has become a powerful parent advocate from within the walls of the Los Angeles Unified School District and was active in elections for the three rounds of the district's Public School Choice Initiative. These efforts have placed the management of traditional public schools into the hands of numerous CMOs. Though an offshoot of Green Dot, their efforts represent potential larger implications for Los Angeles public education.

As stated in their school vision, preparing students in underserved communities to be college ready is the key priority from which new models of labor and management are being developed. Green Dot operates under the fundamental view that all children can go to college. This is not rhetoric. Although there are career technical paths available for students to choose from, students are not afforded a purely vocational course of study, but rather can add it in addition to a college ready path.

Strong leadership development is a key factor in how Green Dot envisions improving academic performance. In light of this priority, there is a rigorous process for developing and evaluating principal leaders on a 360 model. Individuals they supervise, as well as district officials, provide feedback in determining administrative effectiveness.

Focusing on partnerships and network development as a key strategy for success, Green Dot works closely with Loyola Marymount University for research and professional development assistance. Additionally, critical work with the Los Angeles Unified School District and Lennox School District allows Green Dot to serve as a model for small school design, exemplified in 2003, when the Lennox Math and Science Academy was opened by the Lennox School District based on Green Dot's model.

System Infrastructure

At the heart of Green Dot's vision is a teacher contract that is significantly less complex and prescriptive than most other teacher contracts. Valid through 2013, the current contract is only 30 pages. Administration initially looked for the very basic components necessary in a standard teaching contract and excised language that spoke to the day-to-day responsibilities of teaching. The contract delegates decision-making to schools, which the managerial staff claims leads to more leeway and innovation within their schools. "We started with a traditional contract," Petrucci said, "And looked at each section and asked, 'What does this do for students?'"

This contract was not imposed on a teaching staff; instead, it was negotiated with a teacher's union. This is not the case in most CMOs. Green Dot's administration asserts that, contrary to other CMOs' assumptions, a union contract can make the district stronger if consistently and appropriately managed to keep students' interest at the center of discussions and negotiations. The union contract and framework "forces" management to think more clearly about labor implications and to be more transparent in the process of communicating. For example, the most recent round of contract negotiations was the most difficult that the district and union have gone through. State and nationwide budget constraints and the recent Locke Transformation undertaking "stretched and stressed" the organization, according to Petrucci. By working through and negotiating the contract, Green Dot's management and labor forces worked on communicating in ways that best meet student performance. Similarly, Green Dot has worked directly with UFT in crafting the New York contract.

Because the contract does not offer all of the components of a traditional teacher's contract, the company's model of day-to-day operations looks fundamentally different than other districts. As a result, Green Dot's teacher expectations deviate significantly from that of most public schools. At the heart of these expectations is that the Green Dot teacher's workday is not structured around set hours. While student and classroom time revolves around traditional bell schedules, teachers operate on a professional day. Their hours are not defined by the time of the day. Instead, teachers optimize their work schedule to best meet the needs of the students on a site-by-site basis. Teachers may host after school office hours, modeled after a college format, serve on professional committees, or in other ways that directly benefits the needs and vision of the school. This both creates flexibility for teacher and allows for autonomy and accountability at each school.

Site-specific committees grant stipends for teachers' time. Green Dot Union President, Arielle Zurzolo, in reflecting about the professional day said, "I know what I'm signing up for. We accept that it's what we have to do to fulfill the needs of students." This work model is an embedded component of what separates Green Dot's management concept and attempts to tie it directly to student achievement.

In addition to its unique contract and established union, perhaps the single most important component of Green Dot infrastructure as it is currently designed is a heavy reliance on clear communication. Indeed, Green Dot's philosophy of educational change is rooted in the necessity for labor and management to engage in dialogue about student learning. For this to happen, Green Dot has taken efforts to diminish the burden of administrative responsibilities most principals have, centralizing these tasks away from the campus. For this reason, principals are expected to spend at least 50% of their time in classrooms.

A challenge that the district faces in implementing effective instruction across schools is the occasional inconsistency of implementation across the sites. As Green Dot deploys new initiatives to improve student results and school operations, poor implementation at any of the 18 different sites has the potential to "destroy the credibility" of management. In these challenges, Green Dot is cognizant of the tenuous nature of communication and its effects on labor/management relations, sweeping change, and the learning experiences of students.

Sustaining Factors

State, federal and local funding covers Green Dot's operating expenses for mature schools but does not cover the financial needs of starting and growing new schools. Currently, the funding for growth (facilities, furniture and equipment investments, and start-up costs) is supplemented through philanthropy. Petrucci uses a recurring motto when it comes to the funding goals for the district: "same kids, same dollars"; Green Dot schools aim to operate with the same amount of government funding as traditional public schools. With the mature Los Angeles schools already self-sustaining (those with full grades and at least 4 years of operation), even if California funds charters at a lower rate than traditional districts, Green Dot is able to offer salaries that are very competitive with other districts, while providing a college and career ready career pathway for all students. Large grant contributions help sustain the district and are used for starting schools and the development of larger structural projects. For instance, approximately half of a large contribution by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will go towards teacher compensation and the other half will be to develop a more robust information technology infrastructure.

Petrucci noted that the district is a "work in progress." Key members of its negotiating team, Petrucci, Zurzolo, and board member Marlene Canter, readily acknowledge missteps that the district made. In executing the Locke Transformation Project, many of the special programs developed for severely credit deficient students didn't work as well as expected and Green Dot had to redesign quickly. Likewise, one Green Dot school, Animo Justice, was closed due to "poor culture and lack of results for students," according to Petrucci. While these missteps are legitimate critiques of the system, key Green Dot leaders in both labor and management speak of these as areas that have helped improve the organization's practice over time. For instance, in considering the possibility of taking over another large transformational project like Locke, Green Dot's stakeholders readily state that they would not only do things differently, but now have the capacity to ensure this.

Ultimately, Green Dot's success is dependent on the communication between labor and management. Regular standing committees, contractual negotiation, and a general belief that a slimmer contract allows for more direct communication and action are keys to this communication. The infrastructure, simplified contract, and administrative responsibilities allow teachers, principals, and managers to work in dialogue with one another to improve student achievement. Readily acknowledging that this is a messy process, Petrucci states simply, "If you want school site decision making, you have to work at it."

Helena Public Schools, Montana

Context

The working relationship between the [Helena Education Association](#) (HEA) and management in the [Helena Public Schools](#) (HPS) has been transformed from one described by long-time HEA President Larry Nielsen as "adversarial" and "confrontational" to one that is more [collaborative and committed to common outcomes](#). District leaders, including [Superintendent Bruce Messinger](#), credit a process of consensus-building and bargaining developed over the course of a decade and sustained through stable leadership and community support. These conditions have created a positive culture and shared decision-making that extend beyond the bargaining table. Consensus negotiations and joint financial decision-making have led to the implementation of the [Professional Compensation Alternative Plan](#) (PCAP), taking Helena Public Schools from the district with the lowest to the highest teacher salaries in the state. Salaries now range from \$35,417 to \$73,173. A committee of district leaders and union members manages PCAP. New teachers are supported by a mentoring program and targeted professional development called B.E.S.T., or Beginning Educator's Support and Training.

From the late 1970s to the early 90s, HPS and HEA engaged in traditional collective bargaining, which was often contentious. The low point came in 1993, when the lack of trust between labor and management almost led to a strike. Agreements were hammered out over the next few years, but there remained a growing concern that negative labor-management relationships were affecting students in the classroom. Recognizing that the current situation was not working, the district adopted [interest-based bargaining](#) in 1996. Dr. Messinger was hired as superintendent in 1997. Larry Nielsen was elected president of HEA in 2002, providing leadership from a longtime HPS practicing teacher. At the

same time, turnover slowed at the Board of Education and provided opportunities for building new relationships, trust, and stability.

Dr. Messinger came to Helena with experience in the [consensus process](#) for contract negotiations and decision-making. In 2002, he hired a facilitator, [Bob Chadwick](#), to work with district, union, and board leaders. The superintendent, HEA leadership, and all nine board members participated in a lengthy series of meetings. Initially, these leaders were aware of the “high risk” associated with committing to consensus negotiations in an atmosphere of distrust. However, they built trust by expressing their greatest fears and identifying shared outcomes. As Dr. Messinger said, “Eventually instead of spending so much energy pushing back against each other, we spent the energy pushing forward together...That’s what we figured out.” *Helena Independent Record* reporter Laura Tode attended the emotionally-charged negotiations, and district, union, and board members alike credit her accurate reporting for helping to achieve community support for subsequent changes.

Strategic Priorities

The goal of attracting, retaining, and developing the highest quality teachers emerged from the consensus process. According to former union president and current Montana Education Association/Montana Federation of Teachers (MEA-MFT) field consultant, Larry Nielsen, there was clear evidence in the 1990s that HPS was not attracting or retaining enough good teachers. “Teachers were retiring early and going to work in Washington ... the number of applicants for open positions was dismal.” In order to attract the best teachers, district leaders made a commitment to [invest in human capital](#) to increase student achievement. “Having the best teachers is key to student performance. ... Generally to get the best, you need to be willing to pay for the best,” said board member Don Jones. The [Professional Compensation Alternative Plan](#) (PCAP) was negotiated in 2003 and implemented in 2004-05. According to Nielsen, there was significant resistance to the implementation of a new salary schedule when it was first discussed in negotiations, to the extent that he “almost lost an election over it.” Teachers heard rumors of “merit pay,” and even the NEA warned him against “doing that stuff.” To allay fears, union and district leaders used one-on-one communication, visiting schools and talking to teachers. Once the plan was rolled out, teachers supported it. To date, 93% of teachers have chosen to move to PCAP.

PCAP is designed to be “attainable, affordable, and accountable,” in addition to providing opportunities and rewards for professional growth. The PCAP pay scale offers a career ladder with 25 steps. The top step’s salary is almost \$10,000 higher than that of the traditional scale. Rather than years of service, moving up on the PCAP scale requires completion of an approved Career Development Plan, a Professional Service Component (PSC), and a positive supervisor’s evaluation. Newly hired teachers are automatically put on the PCAP; those hired prior to 2004 can choose which salary schedule they prefer. Now 91% of the HPS general fund goes to teacher salaries, and for every open position, there are approximately thirty to forty applicants, according to Jones.

District leaders describe the consensus process as having a positive impact on the culture of the community, resulting in increased student achievement, improved professional development, and instruction in line with their [vision and mission](#) to educate the “whole child.” To support these goals, a labor-management committee is currently overhauling the current teacher evaluation system to complement PCAP and emphasize professional growth. Under the new plan, teachers will need to provide evidence of student achievement. However, student scores on standardized tests will not be part of measuring a teacher’s effectiveness. Messinger said that he finds test scores limiting and that HPS has “broader discussions” about student achievement. According to Messinger, most states’ tests “are about systems rather than students ... (so) to use those to measure teacher performance with a group of kids is inappropriate.” Instead HPS will look at data of student performance that teachers provide. These could include test scores and/or other assessments and measurements regarding how “their presence affects students’ growth and achievement.” However, Messinger did not describe how the district will ensure that these data are reliable or used consistently from school to school, or even from classroom to classroom. Also graduation rates as a measure of student achievement have provided mixed results for HPS. [Montana’s Office of Public Instruction’s data](#) shows a decline in Helena High School’s graduation rate from 78% in the 2007 – 2008 school year to 71% in 2009 and 72.1% in 2010. District figures show a graduation rate of 77.5% in 2010. Dr. Messinger explains this by pointing out that [the OPI system does not account for every student and it is not valid or reliable.](#)

System Infrastructure

The [PCAP](#) plan changed the traditional salary schedule that was based on experience and education to a single “ladder” system in which teachers move up the steps as they meet certain requirements and receive a positive evaluation. The new ladder includes 25 steps and offers teachers “Advanced Professional Education & Training Stipends” (APETS). To advance on the ladder, an educator must:

1. Write, submit, and complete an approved Career Development Plan (CDP) that meets the criteria as set forth in the Career Development Rubric. As outlined in the PCAP [Guideline Book](#) for educators, the purpose of the plan is “to allow educators the opportunities to explore, analyze, and develop quality instructional strategies directly benefiting each individual learner.” The Career Development Plans includes an education component.
2. Perform Professional Service Commitment (PSC) as defined in the plan. The PSC details additional, uncompensated duties that educators take on during the school year, such as serving on committees, supporting peers, or working on school projects outside of the regular school day. An administrator and teacher mutually agree upon the PSC.
3. Receive a positive evaluation as defined in the negotiated agreement. The Accountability Strand evaluation is annual for teachers in their first four years. Tenure is typically granted upon the fourth year. A CDP can be used as part of the educator’s evaluation process under the negotiated agreement.

Helena teachers are placed on one of two evaluation “strands.” Non-tenured teachers transitioning into the profession are in the “Accountability Strand,” which results in annual evaluations. Tenured teachers can opt out of the traditional “Accountability Strand” evaluation process to be a part of the “Professional Growth Strand,” whose purpose is to “promote professional growth through goal setting, to involve the teacher and administrator in cooperative discussions and planning, and to encourage collegial interaction for the accomplishment of goals.” PGP innovations include peer collaboration, observation, and data collection, with administrators serving as coaches and facilitators.

New teachers are automatically placed on the PCAP ladder. When PCAP was implemented in 2004, tenured teachers were offered the option to move to PCAP from the traditional salary schedule. 60% of tenured teachers moved in the first year, and currently (2010 – 2011) 93% of HPS teachers participate in PCAP. New teachers are offered support and development through a mentoring program that matches them with a master educator who has been teaching in Helena for at least five years.

The district and union bargained a Professional Growth Fund to fund professional development, paying for teachers’ sabbatical leaves, tuition and fee reimbursements, and other professional growth opportunities. A committee, made up of two members appointed by the superintendent and three appointed by the HEA, is selected each year to approve proposals and distribute the funds.

Budget transparency is key to the success of HPS’s consensus decision-making. Superintendent Messinger moved budget matters from the business office to the superintendent’s office and opened the budget to union leaders. This move increased trust and led to “shared governance and joint decision-making,” according to Larry Nielsen. When developing PCAP in 2003, labor, management, and board leaders were very concerned about its impact on the District’s finances, so they hired an outside firm to do a long and short-term cost analysis. The analysis showed the plan was cost-effective in the long term. To offset the short-term costs, the district offered retirement buyouts to eligible teachers and pre-paid insurance costs for the 2004 -2005 school year. PCAP was thus put into effect without using any new money.

Despite this thoughtful and ongoing process, district leaders acknowledge that they did not seek enough principal input in the consensus process. This year, Helena is piloting the Vanderbilt Assessment for Leadership in Education ([VAL-ED](#)), evaluating administrators based on the learning-centered leadership research literature that aligns to [Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium](#) (ISLLC) standards. While this is an attempt to more effectively evaluate principals, district leaders have not articulated how they plan to obtain additional principal input in the consensus process.

Sustaining Factors

The [Helena Public Schools](#) has had remarkable stability in leadership, which helped to sustain their productive labor-management relationship. Dr. Messinger has been with the District for fourteen years, and although he is no longer President of HEA, Larry Nielsen, remains in close contact through his work with MEA-MFT. Personnel continue training in the consensus process, and educators and administrators rotate into district committees to experience the process first-hand. Schools and community groups have also received training and use the consensus process.

Contract language states that the union and management have embraced “a problem-solving approach that will encompass a shared decision making process fostering trust and respect.” Recently elected HEA President, Tammy Pilcher, says she inherited a “great situation,” in a district that works. She claims that although some veteran teachers were concerned about the changes brought with PCAP and ongoing bargaining, “Now we’d have a fight if we went back.” Believing that ongoing communication in the district is essential to sustaining progress, a labor-management committee meets monthly to negotiate issues as they come up in the ongoing bargaining process, and union and district leaders meet weekly.

Although Montana has shielded some oil and gas money, funding and impending state legislation could prove challenging for Helena in the coming years. Dr. Messinger’s commitment to not using student achievement data to evaluate teachers could be tested by state legislation. Additionally, state and local funding could impede the effectiveness of professional development and PCAP. However, district leaders are confident in the strength of their consensus process, and see it as a way forward through these challenges.

Hillsborough County Public Schools, Florida

Context

[Hillsborough County Public Schools](#) (HCPS) has a long [history of labor management cooperation](#). In 1968, the district and union stood together through a statewide teacher strike over state funding. Through the 1970s, the administration and the union saw opportunities for school improvement through collaboration on curriculum, assessment, and textbook selection. This developed into shared planning and decision-making in the 1980s and 1990s, which led to innovations in compensation, performance pay, mentoring, and evaluation in this past decade. In the past 43 years, HCPS has had four superintendents. The current superintendent, [MaryEllen Elia](#), began working as a HCPS high school teacher in 1986 and moved to her current position in 2005. School board members have routinely served for as many as 20 years. The board, administration, and union point to stable leadership, shared goals, transparency, positive results, focus on long-term success, and empowerment of teachers as keys to their success.

This shared vision of success is evident when district leaders speak about the way collaboration and conflict are managed within the district. According to Hillsborough County Teachers Association (HCTA) President Jean Clements, “We have a plan, but we know we may have to adjust it. We have to be flexible. We know that we don’t know as much now as we will three months from now.” Moreover, teachers are appointed to district committees by the union. This policy allows another union check on decisions and is significant as only half of the teachers in the district are members of the HCTA. Deputy Superintendent Dan Valdez asserts that he talks to the union every day. He describes their mutual accountability: “They hold our feet to the fire; conversely, we’ll do the same for them. Sometimes, I will get a call, ‘did you think this through carefully?’ That probably means we didn’t. This is never a negative.” Describing the premise that has built trust in the district he adds, “Don’t lie. Do what you say you are going to do and don’t do what you say you are not going to do. We don’t keep score, and we try to keep our egos out of our discussions.” According to Valdez, the union will sometimes “forget a bit” about the contract and he gently reminds them that there are always ways of working within the contract to do what needs to be done.

Strategic Priorities

An internal survey found that 47% of HCPS teachers had seven years of experience or less. Another finding revealed that 60% of the district’s highest needs students were not in what it identified as the highest needs schools. This analysis informed the views of district leaders and helped to inform the strategic direction of the district.

The \$100 million [Empowering Effective Teachers](#) (EET) grant from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) marked the beginning of a seven-year initiative driven by a single student outcome goal: *90% or more of students in HCPS will be ready for post-secondary college/career*. This is an outcome that all stakeholders could support and was developed by a steering committee composed of management, board, and labor leaders as well as focus groups that included teachers and community members. Recognizing that teachers and principals are essential to this goal, HCPS has implemented:

- An intensive two-year induction program with expert mentors on full-release to mentor and evaluate new teachers.
- An evaluation developed with Charlotte Danielson with which teachers are formally observed 3 to 12 times per year. Teachers' evaluations are based in part on new value-added measures developed with the University of Wisconsin based on state assessments and exams created in HCPS (See Figure 1). Many of these local assessments have been in use since the 1980s in HCPS and have been tested for validity and reliability.
- A new evaluation system for principals (See Figure 2).

Figure 1: Teacher evaluation in HCPS

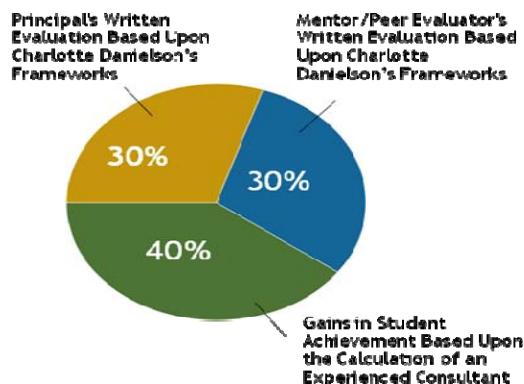
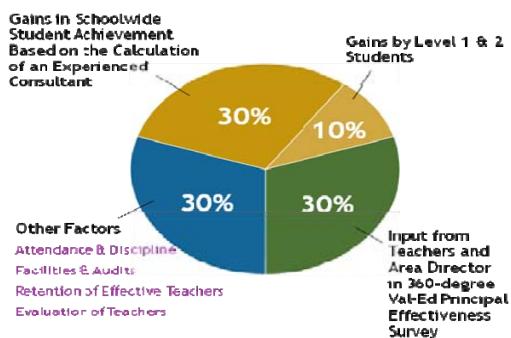


Figure 2: Principal evaluation in HCPS



Performance based on student learning and multiple evaluations, as well as advanced roles for teachers will determine tenure decisions, compensation, and support. With the assistance of Cambridge Consulting, HCPS has trained over 800 peers, mentors, principals, and at least one assistant principal per building to make the additional observations of teachers possible. Significantly, 666 teachers applied for the 119 peer evaluator roles demonstrating strong interest. The administration and union screened these applicants to determine the peer evaluators. HCPS will extend the non-tenured "apprentice" period for teachers from three to four years if necessary to establish at least three years of student learning data. Additionally, all teachers will have the ability to earn higher salaries much earlier in their careers. After three to five years, new teachers who earn high evaluation and value-added ratings will be able to earn as much as teachers in their 20th years on the current salary schedule.

While some reading and math scores are still below the Florida average, HCPS has demonstrated student achievement in multiple areas, receiving an "A" rating from Florida's accountability system the past three years. The four-year cohort

graduation rate is 82.3% and the number of students taking Advanced Placement exams has doubled while performance on those exams has steadily increased in recent years. Additionally, HCPS boasts the highest number of National Merit Scholars, and specifically the highest number of African-American National Merit Scholars, of any district in Florida. To support these efforts, teachers receive \$50 for each student whose score qualifies for college credit.

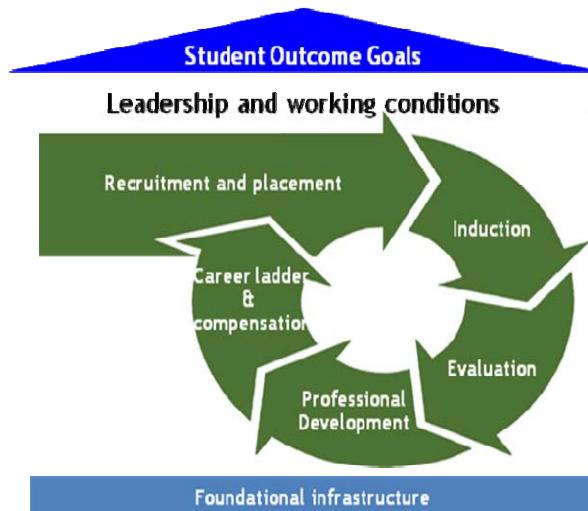
System Infrastructure

According to administration, board, and union leadership the [contract](#) language for teachers and administrators is not particularly remarkable, but the development and implementation of the HCPS plan has been transparent, careful, and flexible in order to cultivate trust. According to the plan, by 2013-2014, all teachers entering HCPS will be placed on a new contract that will no longer reward teachers for advanced degrees and years of experience, but will place teachers that have moved beyond apprentice status into one of three salary bands based on the evaluation criteria developed by the EET grant. This delayed implementation of the compensation system will allow HCPS to collect three years of value-added and observation data to accurately place teachers in those performance bands. In order to reduce opposition to this significant shift in the compensation structure, experienced teachers already in HCPS can opt to remain on the current salary schedule.

One of the most obvious reasons for the district's success is communication, as a number of structures and practices are in place to facilitate effective communication in the district. First, the administration sends out periodic "pulse checks" through Survey Monkey. These "pulse checks" consist of five or six questions on an issue such as the budget to obtain rapid feedback from teachers and thus ascertain their attitudes and collect ideas. Second, teachers receive daily pop-up e-mails from the superintendent that they must read before they can exit out of them, to which they can respond. The administration is committed to a 24- to 48-hour turn around on responses. Additionally, a district [communications Web site](#) and [e-mail box](#) are available for any questions from teachers. At the outset, the e-mail box received approximately 200 e-mails per week and the union and administration jointly answered the questions. As questions have been answered, the number of queries per week has dropped to approximately 15-20. Third, administration, union, and board leaders meet regularly with teachers and community members. Furthermore, Union Representative Forums are held on a regular basis during the school day, in which union building representatives are released from their teaching responsibilities so they can attend the forums and receive timely, accurate first-hand information.

The theory of action behind EET is modeled in Figure 3. Quality leadership and a cycle of talent management support the 90% college/career ready goal for the district. Several structures are in place to make this possible.

Figure 2: Empowering Effective Teachers overview



- The district is offering recruitment bonuses of 5-10% to attract teachers to their Renaissance Schools (HCPS' highest needs schools).

- Mentors are released from their teaching responsibilities for 2-3 years to ensure a focus on the mentoring process. These mentors meet with first-year teachers a minimum of once a week and second-year teachers a minimum of once every two weeks.
- Since 1985 HCPS has been building an extensive local assessment system to supplement state and national tests.
- The district has contracted with outside experts such as the [University of Wisconsin](#) to work with teachers and administrators to develop valid and reliable value-added measures for all subject areas at all grade levels.
- The district is building a data-management system with Lawson Talent Management Systems to warehouse and use the data they are collecting.
- The district is using outside expertise to provide training on their observation tools. This includes an initial two weeks of training, three days of training in schools doing observations, and subsequent one-on-one observation and training sessions with experts. Recalibration of observations is an on-going process to ensure inter-rater reliability.
- A cadre of 119 accomplished peer evaluators has been identified to support teachers through observations. With the ultimate goal of 100%, HCPS currently has a 91% content match for the peer evaluators conducting observations in classrooms similar to their own. These observations will allow the district to tailor professional development to needs identified through observations. Historically, this professional development has been created, delivered, and evaluated by teachers.

Sustaining Factors

The long history of cooperative management, union, and board relationships has established channels of communication that allow for progress in the district. The last contract was approved in 2010 by 96% of HCPS teachers. When given a yes/no “pulse check” about the respect, professionalism, timely feedback, punctuality, and communication of the peer evaluator, teachers responded positively 96-99% of the time for each item. District leaders also highlight the fact that district teachers will not be forced to opt into the new performance contract. This will require the district to run parallel compensation systems for a time, but according to Superintendent MaryEllen Elia, this was “the right thing to do for teachers.”

The district is facing several challenges as they move forward. Due in part to the parallel compensation structures and uncertain Florida legislation, fiscal issues must be addressed. According to Deputy Superintendent Dan Valdez, HCPS is annually spending \$17 million on advanced degrees for teachers. In the new system, by only paying the teacher for the cost of the degree at the rate of a local public university without the salary increase, this money can be re-allocated. However, in the transition period with two salary schedules, this savings will not be realized, since teachers who are benefitting from salary increases for advanced degrees are less likely to opt into the new system. Moreover, the outside expertise and support structures are being supported at least in part through state grants, a Teacher Incentive Fund grant, and the EET grant. District leaders are seeking additional grant funds to subsidize some of these expenses and are hopeful that state legislation will not reduce key funding streams.

HCPS is dealing with the difficulty of using pre- and post-test models for value-added measures that will be used for high-stakes decisions. How will students be encouraged to put forth their best effort on pre-tests that will be ultimately used to determine the impact of the teacher on student learning? The district has already dealt with some teachers who have manipulated this system by declaring them ineligible for a bonus, requiring them to pay back money, or firing them. However, there is concern that as pressure increases, these practices will further confound the validity of the measures. There is also some [concern](#) that a paper-pencil test of art, music, and PE may not be a robust enough measure of all that those subjects entail.

The metrics the district will use to measure the goal of 90% of students being college/career ready need further definition and development. The value-added tools being developed may provide a snapshot of how students are doing in a certain subject, but these tools may not capture the longer-term goal of college/career readiness.

With all of the positive momentum and media attention, HCPS leaders will have to be deliberate in their attempts to continue be open and honest about conflict. At a minimum, internal discussion must remain frank and unguarded even if the public image must be polished.

Finally, district leaders cited the fatigue of teachers and principals who have been doing this difficult work for a number of years. Yet, they are confident that the strength of their partnerships and long-term focus will sustain their efforts over time. District leaders believe strongly in developing leadership within the district, and any change in key individuals is not expected to change the trajectory of the relationship as new leaders are being developed to take on these essential roles.

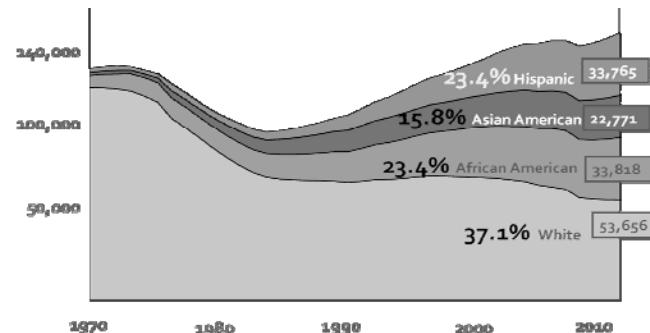
Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland

Context

[Montgomery County Public Schools](#) (MCPS) has enjoyed over a [decade](#) of meaningful [labor-management collaboration](#) made possible by two early recommendations: a 1997 board of education task force call to revise the teacher evaluation process and a subsequent decision by the Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA) to implement the values of “new unionism,” initiated by the National Education Association. During this time, MCEA also took part in the Union Capacity Project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, to develop policies, tools, and procedures around a new system of evaluation.

In 1999, Superintendent [Dr. Jerry Weast](#) was appointed to lead MCPS. Weast noted that two conditions in Montgomery County necessitated his working to build a culture of support and respect among the system’s leaders and staff. These included a demographic shift towards a “majority-minority system” and an increase in poverty. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Demographic Shift in Montgomery County Public Schools



Weast’s call to collaboration was answered by the three unions, including MCEA, [Montgomery County Association of Administrative and Supervisory Personnel](#) (MCAASP), and the [Service Employees International Union Local 500](#) (SEIU). All three invested in developing personal relationships through regular breakfast and lunch meetings. School board president Chris Barclay pointed to the development of a consistent objective among the disparate groups as a major step forward in their collaboration. MCAASP President Rebecca Newman said, “We haven’t always agreed on the ‘how,’ but we’ve always agreed on the goals. ... That’s the foundation for what we’ve done.” Essential to their relationship has been the focus on a community-supported “aspirational goal” with student achievement at the center. “We have the same interests at heart in terms of working with kids,” said Douglas Prouty, MCEA president. “We really got our community to agree on the outcome [of having 100% of students graduate and 80% prepared for college and careers]. ... Then everything else flowed from that,” said Weast.

Other areas of agreement included:

- a commitment to equity;
- the treatment of all employees with dignity;
- a common reform language among system and community members;

- the strategic differentiation of resources;
- a reduction of accusation, blame, criticism, and denial of systemic realities;
- the values of compassion, hope, stability, trust, and courage in unity; and
- the belief in all employees' ability to build capacity.

Even as the community was affected by sniper attacks, the events of September 11, and recent budget cuts, the leadership remained united and moved forward in a continually positive direction. According to Newman, "Your work as leaders gives a clear message about how you value children and ... adults in the environment you work in."

Strategic Priorities

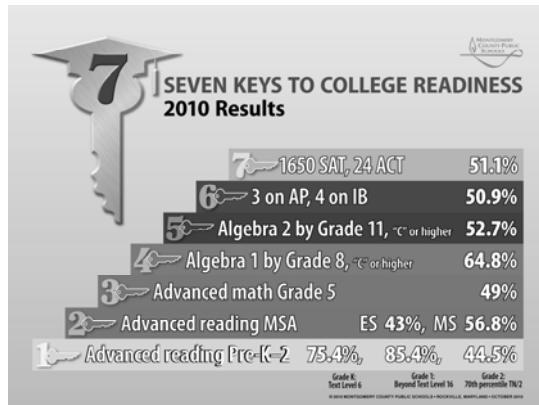
Through data analysis of the county, Weast discovered that Montgomery County essentially had what could be described as two different school systems: a *red zone*, where 81% of MCPS students who receive free and reduced-cost meals (FARMS) live, and a *green zone* where the other 19% live. Nearly 57% of students in the red zone receive FARMS, as does nearly 34% of the English Learners (EL), while the green-zone numbers are nearly 14% and 10.5%, respectively. Weast described the differences this way: "If our red zone was a school system, it would be a failing system." Initially frustrated by Weast's statement, Barclay, not yet a member of the Board said he soon realized that the system's actions towards equity--including lower teacher-to-student ratios, more math coaches and reading specialists, as well as increased money per pupil--could be used as resources for schools in the red zone. The board encouraged this new distribution of resources, especially as ownership and support was fostered within the green-zone communities.

This strategic differentiation of resources was fueled by the system-wide goal: graduating *100% of the students and preparing at least 80% for college and careers by 2014*. By focusing on the core outcome--but not any leader's individual role--the leadership team has been able to demonstrate their ability to stand together in front of all employees and show each other mutual respect. This has given them the ability to achieve the high expectations that they anticipate from all employees and students.

Employee and Family Supports. Providing employee and family supports has been a priority for the board, executive team, and three unions as they developed and implemented programs to achieve their aspirational goal.

- Differentiated support is provided in three observation- and portfolio-based [Professional Growth Systems](#) (PGS) for [teachers](#) (TPGS), [administrators](#) (ASPGS), and [support staff](#) (SSPGS). Each is based on a set of standards or, in the case of SSPGS, competencies. TPGS is based on the six core propositions of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, one-third of which require demonstrated [student achievement](#), including teacher-selected student work; county, state and national standardized assessment data; teacher feedback to students; and student/parent survey data.
- All new employees and those who have failed to meet one or more PGS standard participate in a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) component that provides support to help them achieve system goals. The PAR was developed jointly with the [Harvard Graduate School of Education's](#) Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. Consulting teachers, principals, and support staff are granted time to support peers in the PAR.
- All new employees are introduced to the culture of high expectations from day one in an on-boarding course that articulates the system's core values, mission, and vision.
- The "Seven Keys to College Readiness" chart and "[Aim High](#)" online parent publication have described a common language around the college-readiness goal to be shared with families (Figure 2).

Figure 2: MCPS' Seven Keys to College Readiness



These priorities have led to a 21% and 24% narrowing of the achievement gap in grades three and five reading, respectively (Figures 3 and 4). Student performance on Advanced Placement tests shows an increase in both African American and Hispanic graduate participation and performance. Graduating minority MCPS students, not necessarily all minority students taking Advanced Placement exams, score higher than the national average on these tests (Figures 5 and 6). The graduation rate for all MCPS students is [85% over four years](#), compared to the [nation's 75%](#). 60% of those students who attend college graduate within six years. The MCEA maintains that the teacher attrition rate is 35% over five years, compared to the nation's rate of [nearly 50%](#).

Figure 3: MCPS 3rd Grade Reading

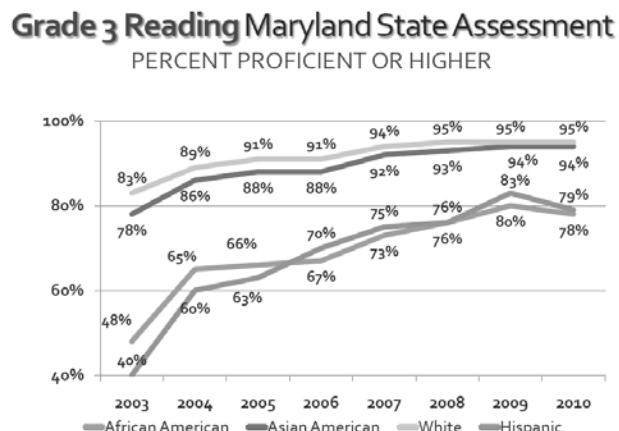


Figure 4: MCPS 5th Grade Reading

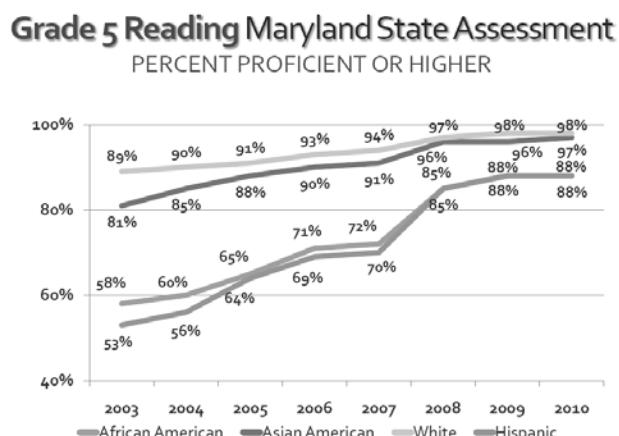


Figure 5: MCPS AP Participation and Performance: African-American Graduates
MCPS African American Graduates

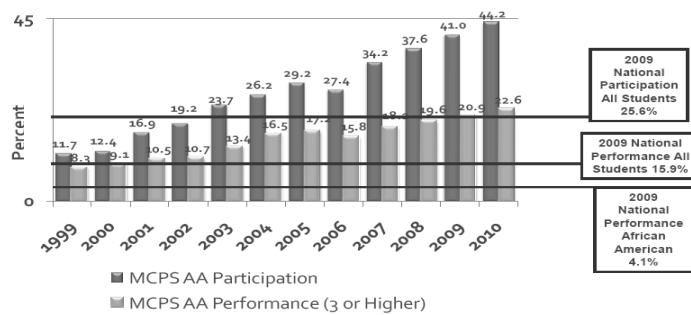
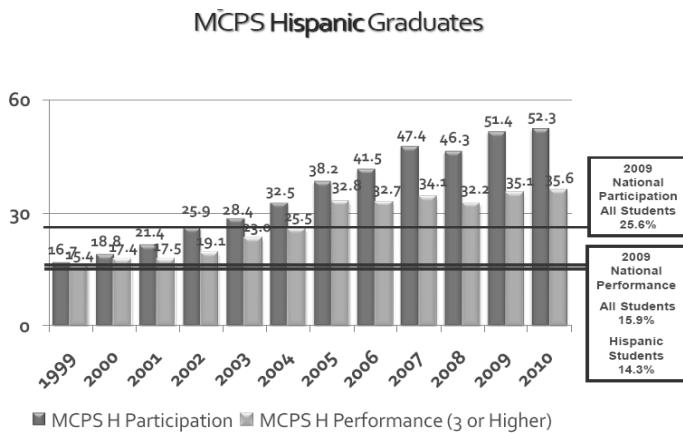


Figure 6: MCPS AP Participation and Performance: Hispanic Graduates



System Infrastructure

Frustrations around the issue of differential pay were an early impediment to forming quality relationships among the three unions. To combat this, Weast decided that all contractual negotiations for salaries would take place jointly. When full PGS implementation was slowed by infighting, he directed staff to sit with the unions in the Associations/Deputy/Chief Operating Officer Committee (ADC) meetings every other week. Initially, a pervasive lack of trust characterized the meetings between the unions and executive staff in the ADC, but the team credits the use of Interest-Based Bargaining (IBB) tactics as central to making the relationship survive. The three PGS frameworks, PAR, and contracts are products of the IBB process. A compact of respect has been included in each contract that defines the culture and behaviors expected throughout the negotiating process.

The institution of the PGS and PAR processes are examples of structures that convey to employees messages of support and mutual respect. By supporting the reorganization of the SEIU and President Merle Cuttitta's vision for the SSPGS, MCPS has taken an additional step. The SSPGS further enhances the culture of respect by encouraging employees to take part in local college and university partnership programs designed to provide skills for promotion. Evidence of success can be seen in the 454 support staff members who have moved to higher positions, including those in teaching and supervisory roles. Moreover, the SEIU implemented study circles to teach English skills to support staff, and to assist them to be parent interpreters at school meetings and safety facilitators during emergency situations. Ultimately, this action shows MCPS students and parents that all staff members are part of a true learning community.

Chris Barclay realizes that his role as board president is to encourage and enable the process of joint leadership, but he understands that the board can also derail the shared leadership. To circumvent this outcome, Barclay described the strategic importance of board members participating in professional development that will help them to understand

where their boundaries are as goal-setting policymakers. Attending National School Board Association and state board association conferences and joining in a professional development partnership with the Panasonic Foundation has helped to produce the working team that remains focused and disciplined with regard to the goal, without wasting resources on unrealistic community demands.

The three unions now feel that the regular ADC meetings contribute to their understanding of each other's needs and lead to consistent messaging, which frequently is sent to all members on joint letterhead. This relationship is also responsible for all three unions' support for the dismissal of an employee when that employee repeatedly does not respond to the PAR process. More than 500 teachers in the last ten years (nearly 4.6% of the current total) and nearly 70 support staff in the last six years (nearly 1% of current staff) have either resigned, retired, or been removed from employment as result of the PAR process.

Sustaining Factors

Focusing actions on the success of children provides common ground on which management, unions, and board members have united. Having a contractual language produces a future commitment that is not easily reversed. MCPS's core values are a part of [teachers'](#), [administrators'](#), and [support staff](#)'s contracts for that reason. Care was taken with regard to the significance words and programmatic titles play in the development of culture as they appear in contracts and everyday language.

Diffusing governance and distributing leadership are vital to the success of the long-term relationship. By empowering others to make systemic decisions that lead to a trusting and empathetic working environment, MCPS has improved their odds for continued success. Distributive leadership is exemplified through the MCPS budget development process, which takes place with the unions, board members, PTA, and executive staff at the negotiating table. Each year the team jointly develops a zero-based operating budget that aligns with aspirational goals. More than \$300 million in adjustments have threatened this process over the past few years. The unions have given up nearly \$89 million in member benefits in each of the last two contract years to ensure that strategic priorities are funded. Having experience at the table gives Prouty the ability to go to his membership and say, "I'm at the table, [so] I know what gets cut. I [participate], and you do through me, [to make] sure that we focus our resources on the classroom." The board, superintendent, and unions have prioritized PGS and PAR due to their successes, keeping these programs relatively untouched through cuts. However, they have fewer than ideal numbers of consulting staff to enact the processes.

Political legislation constantly presents challenges to the system's core values. The leadership team points to common advocacy and MCPS political clout as key factors in maintaining focus. Their 22,000 employees vote and act as legislative liaisons fueled by the district's positive outcomes. Using the success of the system, MCPS wields much influence at the state and local level. When legislation cannot be avoided, the team develops workarounds and sequencing techniques to maintain their focus on the goal.

MCPS received nearly \$5 million in a U.S. Department of Education [Investing in Innovation](#) (i3) development grant for a joint project with Pearson, LLC to produce the next generation of elementary curriculum. Realizing this grant will eventually go away, MCPS has created a cooperative environment based on trust and respect and has made an investment in the future sustainability of systemic priorities. They have chosen to slowly build the capacity for success by doing "a few things well," according to Weast. The fact that MCPS elects a new board president every year and that all but one of the unions have experienced leadership changes since Weast arrived, attests to the fact that the shared accountability and expectations model provides the tools for continuity. By establishing the [Department of Association Relations](#) and reorganizing the responsibilities of key personnel, such as the Chief Operating Officer, MCPS has further institutionalized the power sharing structures that are vital to the collaborative environment.

Noting that even strong relationships can be strained during difficult financial times, MCPS encourages districts seeking to build collaborative models to focus on small decisions that are "easy wins." Once trust and compassion are part of the system through a common commitment, the challenging decisions, like budget development, will be accomplished more easily.

New Haven Public Schools, Connecticut

Context

The [New Haven Public Schools](#) has been engaged in a rapid and comprehensive school reform effort since 2008. With the stated goal of becoming the best urban school district in the country, the [New Haven School Change Initiative](#) hinges on three broad goals: 1) closing the gap between the performance of New Haven students and the rest of the state within five years, 2) cutting the dropout rate by 50%, and 3) ensuring that every graduating student has the academic ability and the financial resources to attend and succeed in college. With those intended goals, a number of strategies have been developed and coordinated around three primary areas of focus: differentiating its 45 schools into a tiered portfolio of schools, developing and evaluating the districts' talent as defined by its teachers and administrators, and developing strong relationships with the New Haven community through committees and student wrap-around services.

The collaborative mindset between the school district, the teachers union, and the city's board of education is a relatively new phenomenon. [David Cicarella](#), president of the New Haven teacher's union, describes the former relationship and level of trust between those offices and individuals as "little to none." Changes were initiated through pressure from the long-serving New Haven mayor, John DeStefano, in 2008. He not only appoints the school board members, but also sits as a voting member. Mayor DeStefano was himself under external pressure from the New Haven business community and Yale University, both of which cited the disproportionate success of a number of the city's charter schools.

With jobs on the line, the sense of urgency originated from the superintendent's office and soon evolved into a pragmatic, blameless approach to addressing the issues in the New Haven system. [Superintendent Reginald Mayo](#) described the most significant breakthrough as the moment when his office decided on the rhetorical stance that, "We're going to be a union." Assistant Superintendent Garth Harries describes that early decision as "a leap of faith" for both the superintendent's office and the teachers' union, and specifically cites David Cicarella's leadership with his teachers as being the transformative factor for bringing them on board. "Dave set a vision for change, to make union partners in pursuing better results for students...through a better environment for teachers and adults." Harries adds that Cicarella used reform as an opportunity to simultaneously make progress on traditional union issues (administrative accountability, school climate) while escaping an unsustainable posture of defensiveness i.e. recognizing that ineffective teachers in classrooms are as concerning to other teachers as they are to administrators).

Relationships and an earnest investment in "doing something different with the schools" coalesced around the common values of trust, confidence in each other's intentions, and a strong respect for process.

Strategic Priorities

With the general charge to "do something differently" from the mayor's office and the New Haven business and university community, the New Haven School Change Initiative was launched in the winter of 2009. The mandatory contract negotiations at this time dictated a unique strategic approach. In concert with the teacher's union, the superintendent's office set up non-conventional 'reform tables' to talk about broad ranging issues and concerns and to engage all stakeholders, including newly invited groups of teachers and administrators. Garth Harries describes these 'reform tables' as places where it was agreed that all parties could 'own up to issues' that needed to be faced, with the common understanding that those conversations would not replace or be used in the concurrent negotiations. The multi-party committees, including teachers, parents and administrators, were energized by the opportunity for spirited collaboration, with such roundtables of collaboration becoming the core of reform efforts. As a result of these efforts, a joint statement of beliefs between the teachers union and the superintendent's office was issued describing the collective approach to a comprehensive school reform effort.

The overall school change initiative soon became about targeting the three areas of differentiated school tiers, assessment of teachers and principals, and engaging community members in the work of school reform (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: New Haven School Change Initiative

NHPS School Change Campaign		
Issues We have Worked On		
Portfolio of Schools	Talent	Community & Parents
<i>Each school will be organized and supported on its own unique path to success</i> <i>(Tiering of schools, School Turnaround , Flexibility in School Work Rules, School Climate Surveys, Central Office Effectiveness and Feedback Survey)</i>	<i>Adults in the system will be managed as professionals to encourage collaboration, empowerment, and responsibility for outcomes</i> <i>(Teacher and Principal Evaluation and Development Systems, including measures of student learning; Pipeline for Teacher Leadership and Leadership Development)</i>	<i>The work of the school system will be as aligned as possible with the other adults who work on behalf of students, including parents and community organizations</i> <i>(Increasing Parent Involvement, Boost! Collaboration with the United Way, New Haven Promise)</i>

The creation of a portfolio of schools addressed the problematic “one size fits all” model and added the benefits of having more flexibility at the individual school level. Determined by three factors including absolute levels of student achievement, student growth, and school learning climate, New Haven schools are categorized into one of three tiers. Higher achieving schools are permitted a higher level of individual school flexibility and the schools with uneven student data and climate results are subject to more comprehensive reform plans and direction external to the individual school. With this differentiated grouping of schools, principals, staff, and central office personnel can oversee changes ranging from curricular adjustments, to budget and staffing.

The New Haven School Change Initiative introduced teacher, principal and central office staff evaluation tools, which were created through committees of teachers and school administrators. The [teacher evaluation tool](#) (TEVAL), includes the multiple measurements of a teacher’s students’ progress, instructional practice, and professional values. The principal and central office evaluation tools, the PVAL and CVAL, are also comprised of multiple measures that are discussed during semi-annual conferences with direct supervisors, including student learning and school performance leadership practices, professional values, and the results of school climate surveys. Significantly, the strategic inclusion of a third party evaluation system for teachers, whereby retired teachers, administrators, and educators are hired to corroborate in-district evaluation, went a long way towards alleviating concerns of fair evaluation and objectivity. To facilitate these third party evaluations, the district contracts with an [Area Cooperative Educational Services](#) (ACES), at a cost of less than ninety thousand dollars per year to hire approximately ten third party evaluators to do the three contractual validation rounds.

For the focus on community and parental partnerships, the district leaders have developed feedback loops with parents and community members. They have done this through the launch of a citywide parent-teacher organization (PTO), voluntary parent pledges for school involvement, and community partnerships such as the [New Haven Promise Initiative](#) whereby Yale University has agreed to provide free college tuition for all qualifying students.

These reform efforts and community connections seem to be impacting New Haven. Student achievement, although a lagging indicator, seems to be improving in NHPS. Reading and math scores on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) still lag significantly behind state averages, but the relative gains on that assessment surpassed the gains made on the statewide average as a whole.

System Infrastructure

The institution of the ‘reform tables’ during recent [contract](#) negotiations are cited most often as the specific infrastructure that allowed the current reform efforts to develop and take root. While described at certain instances as “time-consuming,” the steady attendance of union and superintendent leadership at the working groups demonstrated a show of faith and respect for letting “the process play out.”

According to the administration, board, and union leadership, trust and developed through the interaction of key individuals. In the words of School Board President Carlos Antonio Torre, early interactions and stances by all the leadership went a long ways toward giving the work “momentum” and “breathing space to keep it alive.”

The work of collaboration is also clearly defined and understood by the administration, board and union leadership (See Figure 2). Early in the reform work, Assistant Superintendent Garth Harries describes the creation of a joint statement of beliefs and values, which was later constantly referred as a “touchstone for subsequent discussions.” All leaders now emphasize the value of defining and practicing these specific principles, and accruing a track record of respectful partnership, recognition of leadership responsibilities, and “talking to each other more than their own families.”

Figure 2: NHPS Collaboration

What has “Collaboration” Meant in NHPS?

	Examples and Implications
Start with Common Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reform discussions began with a Joint Statement of Beliefs Similarly, at the start of the TEVAL process, the TNTP survey established a common frustration with existing evaluation and development, and aligned ambitions for a new system
Validate Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are administrators who are not good judges of teacher quality, and teachers need mechanisms of both protection (3rd party validation) and feedback (climate surveys)
Avoid a Broad Brush	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The vast majority of both teachers and administrators are capable, competent people, capable of and eager for professional coaching relationships
Connect Relevant Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrators need the time and focus to be effective coaches and evaluators – which means other issues need a lower priority Similarly, teachers and administrators need high-quality and timely student assessments
Put the Time In	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration means time, commitment, and patience – in order to demonstrate a commitment both to teamwork and to common objectives

Sustaining Factors

The New Haven School Change Initiative has garnered a significant amount of positive press and attention. While the leaders who participated in the early collaboration are essential representatives for the work to continue, the New Haven mayor has been careful to frame the reform effort as a specific “strategy of collaboration,” one that is fundamental to the sustainability of reform. Garth Harries further describes the importance of shifting the focus on individual leadership to the work of “setting different cultural modes, where it’s not just the identifiable administrative, board, and union leadership who own the work, but rather “all the other people are engaged,”

There are a number of challenges and opportunities facing NHPS leaders as they moves forward in their work:

- Union President David Cicarella cites two significant areas that the reform efforts have not included that of merit pay and how to quantify value-added assessments on teaching and learning. He describes his own and his membership’s need to explore how “to do it and do it fairly” while also expressing unwillingness to “speak on behalf of the district.”
- The funding for many of the initiatives comes from external sources and foundations, creating potential issues if those funds are not consistent in the future. Superintendent Reginald Mayo cites the benefit of the recent

attention that has attracted funders and education reform advocates alike. With the [Peter and Carmen Buck Foundation](#) funding leadership development, the New Teacher Project funding teacher recruitment, and a local community foundation funding the full operation of the New Haven Promise office among others, a significant dependence has been built up on these external funding streams.

- While the superintendent's office cites the recent improvement of students on the statewide CMT, the New Haven public school text scores are still significantly below the statewide averages. [School board president Carlos Antonio Torre](#) also references the "2,000 suburban students" from greater New Haven communities who are on a voluntary waiting list to attend the New Haven schools through its Urban-Suburban exchange program-- students who are primarily interested in the specialized magnet schools established in the city. Questions of parity between schools within the New Haven school system, and how to provide additional or differentiated academic services to schools with a disproportionate number of academically at-risk students has yet to be directly addressed.

Plattsburgh City School District, New York

Context

[Labor-management collaboration](#) has a long history in the [Plattsburgh City School District](#) (PCSD). A precipitating crisis, a strike in 1975, provided the impetus for the collaborative relationship. Prior to 1975, the Plattsburgh (NY) School District was described as a "district of islands." In the wake of the strike, union president Rod Sherman realized that the teachers had never been so unified. He went to the new superintendent and said, "The teachers are together. Let's take this opportunity and build a district."

This was the beginning of a strong working relationship between board, union, and administration spanning four decades. The driving principle of this collaboration is what is right for students. This can be a cliché when employed to justify top-down administrative decisions. In Plattsburgh collective decision-making drives great student learning. This is not a pre-industrial "meet and confer," nor is it adversarial industrial bargaining. Rather, stakeholders have a voice in solving problems, and make real decisions.

In the Plattsburgh collaborative model, administration is treated as a set of tasks, rather than a group of people. These tasks can then be distributed to the level in the organization where the work will be carried out. The administrators monitor the resulting decisions and provide support. This model builds the capacity of the school district by providing opportunities for leadership development at all levels.

The union participates by encouraging its own dense leadership network to staff the committees needed to maintain the system. The Plattsburgh Teachers Association (PTA) was rebuilt in the wake of the 1975 strike as a collaborative organization. While administration and negotiation of the contract remain tasks of union leadership, the more essential task is its partnership in the governance of the district. Over the past 36 years, the union has become an organization that cultivates teacher leadership, developing talent for the administration and board to draw on in advancing excellent student learning in the district.

The philosophy of the relationship is straightforward. The union helps solve administration problems; administration helps solve union problems. The enterprise proceeds with a single end goal in mind: great student outcomes.

Strategic priorities

Five strategic priorities drive the collaborative culture in PCSD, which reflect the [core values](#) of the district:

- Common sense and integrity – a deeply felt ethic has been cultivated over almost four decades, shaping the relationship between the district and the union. Board Vice President Tracy Rotz said, "It's a simple process – it's what your mother taught you." Or as Superintendent Jake Short puts it, "People who can't leave their ego out of it shouldn't be in it."

- High-level student outcomes – All stakeholders in the PCSD share the goal of excellent student learning. Every process in the district becomes a tool to promote this goal, including the collective bargaining process.
- Shared responsibility – All stakeholder groups, including teachers, administrators, the board, parents, students, and the voting public share responsibility for student achievement. Superintendent Short said, “They function more as one big family than as a school district.”
- Shared risk taking – the administration and union proceed together in assuming risk, which makes innovation viable in tough issues such as teacher evaluation, value-added models (VAM), or salary negotiations in difficult economic times.
- Informed professional practice – Key to achieving great student outcomes is the professionalization of teaching practice. Promoting teachers as professionals validates them as full partners in the educational enterprise; using their professional expertise and desire for growth develops practices that improve student achievement.

System infrastructure

Shared decision-making reflects the strategic priorities of common sense and integrity, as well as shared responsibility. It is supported through two formal structures, designated in the contract and one informal practice. The District Wide Educational Improvement Council (DWEIC) recommends changes in current education policies, discusses educational changes in the district prior to implementation, and provides for dialogue between the union, the administration and the board, allowing input by the professional staff on district-wide matters. In addition to professional staff, union leaders and administrators, the council includes board members and other stakeholders, as set forth in the contract.

The School Improvement Planning Committees (SIPC) operates from the Memorandum of Agreement creating these committees and charges them to:

1. Promote maximum understanding of the functional, professional and personnel problems of teachers and administrators, and
2. Provide teacher advice in planning anticipated change in educational policy, programs and curriculum.

The committees consist of at least three teachers, appointed by the association, and an administrator. DWEIC reviews any SIP policy recommendations which have potential district-wide impact.

The final internal structure which facilitates shared decision making is an informal practice that reflects a commitment to shared ownership and responsibility. Short speaks of, “Driving down decisions to the lowest possible level.” Short encourages decisions to be made at the level where they will be implemented to the extent possible while monitoring and providing support. This builds the capacity of the district and creates a pool of leadership talent with experience in problem solving, taking advantage of the professional expertise of teachers.

Shared decision-making, implemented at three different scales within the organization, has important benefits for administrators. They are trusted because sharing information is safe and stakeholders who are a part of the process have an authentic say in decisions that result from that information. Administrators and the board enjoy outstanding communication and flow of information, which is essential to effective administration.

The blurring of lines between union and administration is reflected in the fact that the superintendent and the union president confer daily. This frequency of contact is far greater than in places where the relationship between union and administration is adversarial and reactive. Excellent communication even extends to mutual vetting of e-mail messages to staff.

In 2009, PCSD began developing the Peer Assistance and Review System (PARS) which speaks to the strategic priorities of Shared Risk Taking, Informed Professional Practice, and High Level Student Outcomes. In PARS, teams of accomplished teachers participate in the teacher evaluation process and provide recommendations for the improvement of professional practice. Administrators continue to have ultimate responsibility for evaluation, but the

PARS team provides expert advice to direct professional development. The collaboration of teachers permits new hires to be observed up to 20 times a year, and provides a wealth of data for administrators to make wise tenure decisions.

The initiation of PARS in Plattsburgh provides an example of the district helping to solve the union's problem. According to Sherman, making the case for PARS was going to be difficult for the union. Short stepped up. "Jake said this is not about trying to fire people . . . Our members needed to hear that - he knew this was a problem for me."

In 2011 PCSD began proactive work on a new evaluation system for teachers and principals. The system addresses the strategic priorities of Informed Professional Practice, and High Level Student Outcomes, incorporating:

- Student achievement data
- VAM – Value added methodology (locally developed for the teachers in untested subjects)
- Multiple measures
- Scaled scores: 1-4 scale for each of the components of the New York State teaching standards.¹
- Tied to New York State benchmarks

VAM is a challenging subject that was tackled in the context of a problem-solving, collaborative labor – management relationship. Sherman pointed out that "VAM is tough work – dicey stuff" requiring 4-6 years of data. Teachers needed to be involved because the formulas are not transparent and they need to know that it is fair.

PCSD and the PTA use the collective bargaining process to promote the end goal of the enterprise--student learning. While on the surface, contract language is fairly conventional, and the district employs a single salary schedule, two practices support the focus on student outcomes.

Although Plattsburgh does not refer directly to Interest-Based Bargaining (IBB) in their presentation, the way they negotiate is broadly consistent with IBB. As in the classic formulation, their approach is "Hard on the problem, but easy on the people." Where the PCSD approach may diverge from IBB is that the interests of students are at the forefront of the process, as opposed to those of the participants.

The process is most straightforward on the question of salary, the most challenging aspect of IBB in teacher negotiations. Sherman makes sure his executive committee understands the districts financials. The district in turn is transparent and forthcoming with data. In lean years the union is willing to forgo salary increases. The district is regarded as fair with increases in stronger economic years.

The district uses a process of continuous bargaining, a "resolutions style contract memorandum" to create memoranda of agreement (MOAs). Sherman said these are "Loaded with whereases," which define the problem. Rather than arrive with contract-ready proposals, as in positional bargaining, the two sides work mutually to solve problems. MOAs of a permanent nature are rolled into the next contract automatically, which shortens the list of items that need to be bargained, and allows problems to be resolved as they arise, rather than festering until the next round of negotiations. Examples include the MOAs which created the DWEIC and SIPC.

When the union and district approach the public to fund a contract, they can make the case that what taxes will be paying for is a plan for improved student outcomes. An illustration is that during periods of declining enrollment the district did not lay off teachers. Rather teachers added value to the instructional program through expanded instructional offerings. Plattsburgh boasts a student teacher ratio better than both state and national averages (10:1 Plattsburgh's student: teacher ratio (national 16:1 / NYS 14:1)) and offers a program of studies generally found only in much larger districts, including 15 college-credit/AP courses, and programs such as German, Farsi, and Aeronautical Engineering. Reductions in force have been achieved through attrition. The current economic crisis is challenging, and the district is facing its first layoff since the 1970's.

¹ Those components are all rated using rubrics scaled from 1 to 4 in increments of .1. This comprises 60% of a teacher's evaluation. Student growth is the other 40% which is separated into two components: 20% on state tests and 20% on local measures. In subjects where there is no state test the full 40% will be judged on local measures.

Sustaining Factors

PARS and the teacher/principal evaluation system have been encouraged and sustained by an American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Innovation Fund Grant and by a Federal I3 Grant. The AFT grant had three deliverables: a set of teaching standards, an evaluation instrument for teachers that had multiple measures, and a PAR system to bring these two pieces together. This grant, which is coming to a close, included all training, and subs, plus the cost of national experts brought in by AFT. The I3 Grant includes release time for a teacher coordinator and honoraria for teachers piloting the project. Short pointed out that "It takes some of this extra stimulation of funds to make this work."

The evaluation system created through these grants is labor intensive. The district is facing layoffs for the first time in an uncertain environment. The continuation of this work may depend on an economic recovery.

PCSD has benefitted from consistent long-term leadership. Sherman has been the PTA president since 1973. During that time the district has had just four superintendents. There are several mechanisms for sustainable leadership succession.

The union vets board candidates for a disposition towards collaboration and is highly involved in school board elections. They send out letters about their endorsements to all 800 NYSUT members in the city. Rotz said, "The nice thing is they are up front about the endorsement – it is about continuity and trust." According to Short, "The union is looking for education-minded people, not union-loving people." Subsequently, board members who understand the Plattsburgh collaborative culture look for superintendents with demonstrated skill managing collaborative labor-management relationships.

The district has experienced board and administrative turnover, but not turnover in the union presidency. Sherman's approach is to model the leadership style, then identify promising people for leadership opportunities on committees like SIPC and DWEIC. This creates a cadre of leaders from whom a successor can emerge.

Saint Francis, Independent School District 15, Minnesota

Context

[Independent School District 15](#) (ISD 15) in St. Francis, Minnesota [reshaped](#) labor management relations after narrowly avoiding a strike in 1991. Shortly thereafter, the St. Francis Federation of Teachers chose to elect a new union president and negotiating team. Randy Keillor, current coordinator of the district's Student Performance Improvement Plan, joined the new team. "Our new negotiating team came in with the sense that we wanted to do something different in terms of the relationship between the teachers and the school district. What we had been doing was failing."

"We had to take care of some baggage on both sides of the table," current union president and teacher Jim Hennesy said. "We had to learn how to listen to one another and we created a culture of trust. Once we did that, then we could work." According to Keillor, the collective bargaining [agreement](#) then became an opportunity "to build a relationship as opposed to simply getting a legal document completed and signed at the end of every few years."

[Edward Saxton](#), who brought 17 years of classroom teaching experience to St. Francis when he became an assistant principal in 1995 and superintendent in 2003, similarly re-envisioned his role as a school and district administrator. Saxton emphasizes the importance of individual relationships: "I deal with Randy and I deal with Jim. They're not 'union guys,' they're people. You don't need to have adversarial relationships. You get enough of those without trying."

The positive relationships among current leaders convey clear mutual respect, humor, partnership, pragmatism, and common purpose. The [result](#), fostered over two decades and influenced by state education policies, is a performance-based compensation and evaluation system rooted deeply in local professional development and collaboration.

Strategic Priorities

State-level education policies significantly influenced the strategic direction of professional development and performance-based compensation in St. Francis.

Minnesota legislated in 1995 that schools must reserve 2% of their general revenue for staff development. In 1997, ISD 15 began negotiating the structures and amounts of individual professional development time, which initially totaled 20 hours of paid annual, individual professional development. Union leadership attended the American Federation of Teachers [Educational Research and Dissemination](#) (ER&D) program in 2000 and wrote a proposal to replicate professional development through the creation of the Teacher Academy. Established in 2001, the [Teacher Academy](#) became the cornerstone for subsequent innovations in professional development, evaluation, and compensation.

Although Minnesota initiated funding for five models of alternative compensation programs in 2001, St. Francis declined to pursue funding at that time due to concerns that teachers would not be receptive to performance-based compensation. After further reflection and two subsequent years of flat state education funding, St. Francis decided to move toward performance-based compensation systems in 2004 because alternative compensation structures appeared to be the “most likely means to significantly increase teacher pay” according to the union executive council.

In 2005, Minnesota created the [Quality Compensation for Teachers Program](#) (Q Comp). Specifically, Q Comp finances collaborations between school districts and teachers to implement career ladder and advancement options, job-imbedded professional development, teacher evaluation, performance pay, and alternative salary structures. ISD 15 successfully applied for Q Comp funding in 2005. The district then utilized the Teacher Academy as a platform to create a new compensation system, the Student Performance Improvement Program (SPIP).

Initially, 54% of ISD 15 teacher leaders supported the concept of performance-based pay. “That was enough to give us permission, but it wasn’t really strong enough to do anything with,” Keillor said. “We had to do a really good job communicating with staff that we were going to build that number.” The district then held multiple question and answer sessions at every school site. Within a year 70% of teachers voted in favor of negotiating a performance-based salary system. Teachers hired before 2005 were given a choice regarding participation; new hires were not. The district implemented SPIP in 2005 and 85% of teachers voted in favor of the new system. Currently 90% of teachers participate.

System Infrastructure

The Teacher Academy represents the centerpiece of reform in ISD 15. The Teacher Academy includes ongoing, job-imbedded support that consists of three primary features:

- A three-year-long new teacher induction period that includes a four-day orientation, one-on-one mentoring with a trained, job-alike teacher, and one academy class per year.
- Academy classes and study groups that provide support for each teacher to apply 32 professional development hours toward his or her individual growth goal.
- Site-based staff development for teams of about 10 teachers.

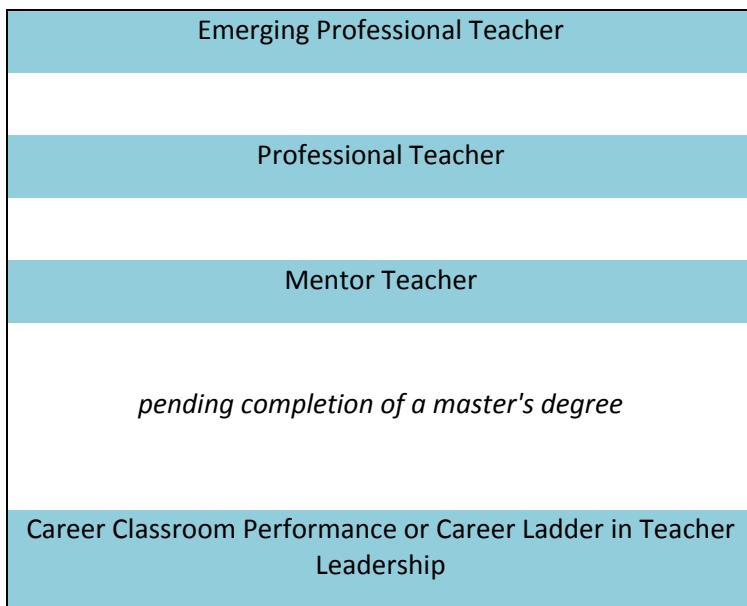
The structure of the Teacher Academy allows for choice and facilitates a thoughtful, flexible, and individualized approach to professional development. By providing each teacher with support and training, teachers engage in a continuous improvement model that seeks to raise student achievement by maximizing teacher performance. For example:

- Academy class offerings occur on a variety of timelines to accommodate the differing availability and scheduling preferences of staff.
- The two Academy coordinators are teachers on a half-time assignment. Coordinators are chosen by a panel on which teachers constitute a majority.
- To become a mentor, teachers must participate in 24 hours of training in the summer and then participate in a “refresher” when actually assigned to mentor.
- Site staff development teams select their own peer leader to support individual members’ goals and plans. The peer leader serves on the site committee and facilitates each team’s Professional Review Team (PRT).

During the full implementation years of the Teacher Academy at the beginning of the decade, positive correlations with student growth and achievement occurred. In comparison to other districts in the state, ISD 15 increased student achievement by an average of 13 points in mathematics and 10 points in reading (2002-2005).

The Student Performance Improvement Plan utilizes the Teacher Academy framework as a foundation for supporting, evaluating, and compensating teachers as they progress through the available career paths.

Figure 1: SPIP Career Ladder Paths



At each step on the ladder, teachers receive one of three categorical performance descriptors: "in progress," "proficient," or "established." Teachers advance by repeatedly earning established rankings. Per a School Board requirement, teachers only may continue to progress by earning a master's degree. Teachers who choose not to pursue a master's degree plateau approximately \$20,000 below the potential maximum salary. To accommodate the advanced degree policy, the Teacher Academy partners with a nearby university in Minneapolis so that teachers may earn a master's degree in curriculum and instruction while simultaneously fulfilling requirements of the Teacher Academy.

Within SPIP, teachers also receive stipends for assuming additional leadership roles. Stipends range from \$1,100 to \$12,000 and depend on the nature of the responsibilities.

Figure 2: ISD 15 Salary Structure (2009-2011)

Salary Schedule (2009-11)					
Teacher Level	BA	BA - Mentor	MA	MA - Mentor	Accumulated Annual Reviews Required
Teacher 1	\$39,120		\$40,750		Entry Level
Teacher 2	\$45,641		\$47,814		3 (all proficient or above)
Teacher 3	\$52,160	\$53,247	\$55,420	\$56,507	6 (all proficient or above)
Career 1			\$59,767	\$60,854	10 (7 established)
Career 2			\$64,114	\$65,201	13 (10 established)
Career 3			\$71,542	\$72,629	16 (13 established)
Teacher 4				\$60,854	7 (4 established)
Teacher 5				\$65,201	7 (4 established)
Teacher 6				\$72,629	7 (4 established)

Extended Responsibility Stipends Range - \$1,100 to \$12,000

Teacher evaluations reflect progress toward individually chosen professional development goals. Individual goals align with staff development opportunities offered through the academy. Although the district estimates that individual teachers drive 80-90% of their own goals and that the majority of teachers choose relevant, rigorous objectives, the Performance Review Team (PRT) approves final goals and administrators can encourage teachers to focus on specific areas of need.

St. Francis attempted to create a fair evaluation system by utilizing multiple evaluators and establishing safeguards. Every PRT consists of one administrator and two peers. Of those two peers, one is the team leader (whom the individual teacher helped select). Moreover, if a teacher disagrees with the evaluation of a PRT, that teacher can appeal to the union president. Since SPIP was implemented in 2005, the district has used the appeals process once. Transparency and opportunities for direct feedback are embedded throughout SPIP. If a teacher does not achieve the highest level in any given performance review, the review team must describe specific steps that the individual teacher needs to take to earn an “established” rating.

Indeed, support for SPIP appears to emanate from all levels within the district, including district administration, the School Board, Education Minnesota St. Francis, and teachers.

According to the University of Minnesota Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement Study, 89% of teachers in St. Francis highly support SPIP, 82% of teachers believe that students will achieve greater academic gains, and 79% believe of teachers believe that advancement within the salary structure should be connected to student achievement (2008).

Sustaining Factors

The Teacher Academy and Student Performance Improvement System receive support from both teachers and administrators. Although teachers lead the majority of initiatives, administrators actively participate. Not only do administrators contribute to academy classes, all school and district-based administrators belong to Performance Review Teams.

The opt-in system represented the “single most important thing that we did that makes our program in Minnesota significantly different,” according to Keillor. Because teachers were presented with a choice and had opportunities input along the way, external studies confirmed high levels of teacher buy-in with the new compensation structure. The district also moved along an extended timeline, declining to move forward until teacher buy-in had been established.

Challenges

- Maintaining sustained funding levels represents the primary challenge to ISD 15’s performance-based compensation system. Q Comp funding, for instance, provides approximately \$260 per student, or 7% of the funding needed for annual salaries.
- For every teacher who transitioned from the previous set salary structure to the new performance-based system, the cost of the funding transition averaged \$4,000 per teacher.
- Anticipated retirements have not occurred at the rate anticipated by projections made prior to the economic downturn. According to the district, this has presented challenges which have not been insurmountable but are beginning to create some pressure.
- To maintain the quality of the Teacher Academy and the Student Performance Improvement Program, a leadership pipeline needs to be maintained. Several key long-term leaders in the district are approaching retirement, necessitating a transition. Yet, the focus on developing leadership internally through these same systems and career pathways seems promising. Approximately 80 of the 360 teachers in ISD 15 serve in formal roles as teacher leaders.

The creation of a performance-based evaluation and compensation system in St. Francis evolved over the course of 20 years as a response to state policies and improvements to internal teacher support structures. Ultimately, according to

ISD 15, "A system that is indifferent to the performance of its employees and rewards them alike regardless of effort or effectiveness is based on an assumption that what those employees do really isn't very important or difficult."

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, North Carolina

Context

[Winston-Salem/Forsyth Country Schools](#) (WSFCS) has prioritized communication and relationship building as essential parts of its work with staff, the school board, and the public. Though North Carolina is one of five states in the U.S. where collective bargaining for school employees is prohibited under state law, the [North Carolina Association of Educators](#) (NCAE) has historically looked to exert influence over the state legislature on a range of important issues, including budget and working conditions. With 65,000 members, the NCAE, a state affiliate of the [National Education Association](#), is the 14th largest of the 53 NEA state affiliates. The [Forsyth County Association of Educators](#) (FCAE), led by Tripp Jeffers, attributes much of its strength locally to its numbers and ability to organize at a grassroots level. With 3,300 members, roughly 40% of all school staff and more than half of the teachers in WSFCS have opted to join FCAE. This compares to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools which, despite having more than twice as many schools as WSFCS, has roughly half as many members in their local affiliate.

[Dr. Donald Martin](#), superintendent of WSFCS since 1994, deliberately seeks to cultivate inclusive leadership in his district. In discussing the kind of leadership required in today's educational climate, Dr. Martin asserts, "People have to feel a lot more ownership in their organization, in their district, to actually give their best efforts. ... If people feel like they're engaged and if the vehicle happens to be the teachers association for that to happen, well then that's good ... that's a structure." There are multiple structures that allow for close participation among district, FCAE, and school board members. These have included: FCAE Task Forces on Teacher Working Conditions (2007), Exceptional Children (2009) and Strategic Compensation (2011), monthly FCAE meetings with the superintendent, a Teacher Advisory Council, and the planning and review committee for the district's Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) and Race to the Top (RTT) applications. The majority of school board members have also served since 1994, strengthening consistent leadership within the district. Speaking about the current principal selection process, heralded by Dr. Martin and inclusive of both teachers and board members, School Board Chair Donny Lambeth comments, "...That's a very different culture than it was 17-18 years ago."

Strategic Priorities

WSFCS has secured \$31.6 million in federal grants to accelerate their work around the state's ambitious goals for student achievement and teacher and leader effectiveness. Central to [the state plan](#) is the [North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process](#), adopted in 2008 and required for use in 2010-2011, which is designed to assess teacher performance in relation to the five NC Professional Teaching Standards. FCAE offers required training to teachers on the evaluation process, which asks principals to assess teacher progress using a rubric detailing four levels of performance (Developing, Proficient, Accomplished, and Distinguished). Ratings are based on classroom observations and artifacts compiled by teachers as evidence of their practice. Beginning this school year, documentation for at least one standard must include an example of student growth data, including SAS Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) results or other approved measures. Principals must observe probationary teachers three times during the school year, and a peer must observe them once. Beginning in 2010-2011, teachers must be rated "Proficient" on all five teaching standards to be eligible for tenure. The evaluation process is also designed to inform professional development, as teachers are required to develop growth plans aimed at improving performance on standards specifically identified for growth through self-assessment, post-observation conferences, and the summary evaluation conference. The local and state teachers' associations collaborate to provide an array of professional development opportunities available to teachers as part of this process.

Within North Carolina, WSFCS has emerged as a leader both in the use of EVAAS data and teacher willingness to use this data as part of the professional decision-making process. WSFCS was an early adopter of the EVAAS system and has been actively involved in developing teacher support for the use of EVAAS over the past five years. Videos, endorsed by the district and the union, have been made available online, explaining value-added measures in a "non-threatening way." The district made the decision not to release scores to teachers until there was two years' worth of value-added

data. Under the district's new TIF grant, teachers are rewarded for student learning gains not only individually, but also as part of grade-level teams and whole schools, fostering the kind of school-based collaboration that FCAE emphatically supports.

Though FCAE President Tripp Jeffers says, "Dr. Martin and I disagree a bit on value-added data," he further explains, "Having a good relationship is not predicated on perfect agreement. ... but, because there's always the expectation of inclusion and input, you're able to agree to disagree." While Martin and Tripp may disagree at points, the district's new [Reduction in Force \(RIF\) policy](#) also points to their capacity to reach true compromise. During 2009-2010, school board discussions around revising the 20-year-old policy coincided with state efforts to get superintendents and NCAE presidents to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) required by their Race to the Top application. The NCAE already had concerns about using student test scores as the basis for measuring teacher effectiveness, and when WSFCS proposed incorporating EVAAS data to inform the district's RIF policy, FCAE threatened not to sign the MOU. Though the conflict represented a boiling point in district tensions, School Board Chair Donny Lambeth pushed for consensus-building discussions between Dr. Martin and FCAE. Three negotiation meetings totaling seven hours ensued; as a result, FCAE signed the MOU, and both labor and management embraced a balanced RIF policy, based on both seniority and teacher evaluations.

System Infrastructure

Along with the participation of FCAE in various standing and ad hoc committees in WSFCS, the voice of teachers is solicited on an on-going basis through the Teacher Working Conditions Survey. First developed in WSFCS in the early 1990s, the [North Carolina Governor's Teachers Working Conditions Survey](#) is now administered throughout the state during even years. Locally, the survey is also administered by FCAE during the odd years and covers a range of important topics that include: facilities and resources, school leadership, professional development, and instructional support. Teacher feedback is used to inform the district on various district priorities:

- Every School Improvement Plan must include a goal that addresses a problem area identified by the survey.
- The district's principal selection committees review statewide results on the Governor's TWC survey.
- FCAE annually recognizes the highest scoring and most improved principal (based on select survey items) at a school board meeting.
- Survey data are used to inform principal evaluations and professional development.

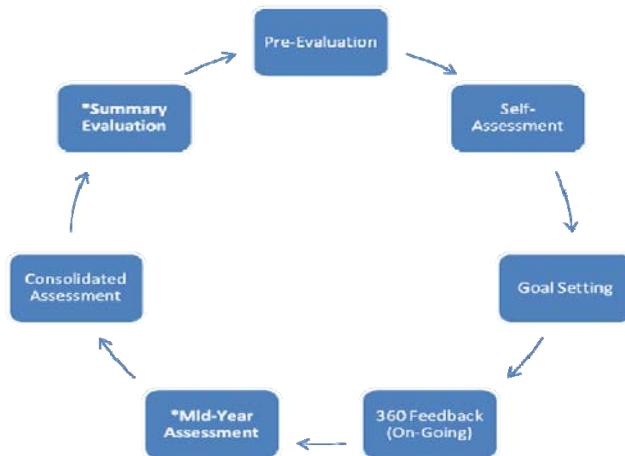
In 2010, 89.5% of teachers completed the survey--slightly more than the 88.8% who responded statewide. That same year, 79% of teachers in WSFCS agreed that, "Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues."

The emphasis on shared accountability is reflected in the use of a rigorous evaluation process for school leaders. The [North Carolina Principal and Assistant Principal Evaluation Process](#) is based upon the state's Standards for School Executives which details seven areas of competency that must be possessed by a school leader who is "an executive instead of an administrator." The seven Standards for Executive Leadership include:

- Strategic Leadership
- Instructional Leadership
- Cultural Leadership
- Human Resource Leadership
- Managerial Leadership
- External Development Leadership
- Micro-political Leadership

Similar to the teacher evaluation process, four levels of performance are determined through a process of self-evaluation, meetings and a site visit by the superintendent/ district designee. The evaluation process is guided by a rubric detailing each standard and artifacts that shows evidence of the school leader's practice. The asterisks in Figure 1 indicate the required components of the process.

Figure 1: Principal Evaluation Process

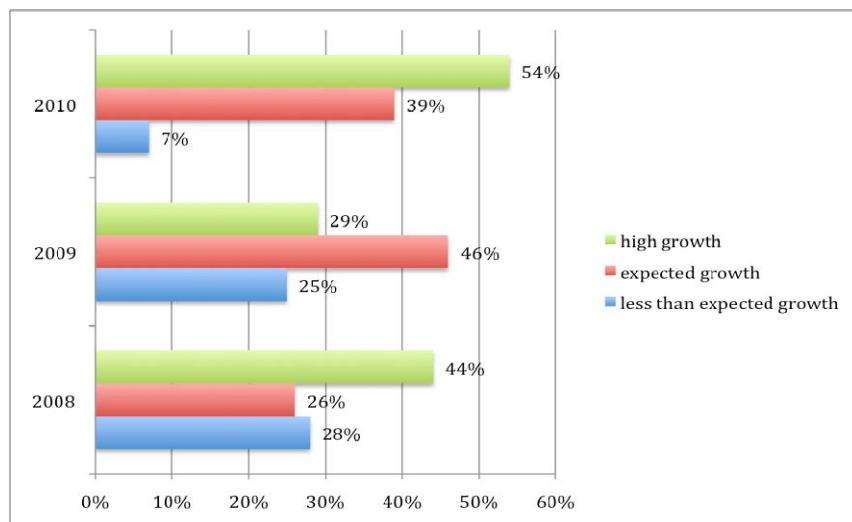


Beginning in 2010-2011, all districts in North Carolina were required to use the Principal and Assistant Principal Evaluation Process. However in WSFCS, it has been in use since 2008-2009. Along with the teacher and school leader evaluation processes, McRel also developed a Superintendent Evaluation Process, not required for use in the state. WSFCS is currently using its own process for Dr. Martin's evaluation which is guided by the district's strategic plan and asks the school board to assess progress on specific objectives through a checklist evaluation and written feedback.

Sustaining Factors

WSFCS made student achievement gains comparable to the top urban districts in North Carolina. It ranks third, after Guilford County and Charlotte-Mecklenburg, in the number of schools making Adequate Yearly Progress. Guilford County is at 59.5%; Charlotte-Mecklenburg is at 57.7%; and WSFCS is at 54.3%. Each of the three districts has approximately 50% of students receiving free- or reduced-price meals. Additionally, WSFCS has set its own high bar for continuous improvement. In 2010, 93% of schools made expected or high growth, up from 70% in 2008 (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: WSFCS School-wide Growth on North Carolina State Assessment



The intense focus of administration, board, and FCAE leadership on student achievement has had a significant impact on outcomes, and the mutual respect and trust among these various groups is apparent in the structures, policies, and language employed within the district. Implementation during the 2010 school year of Professional Learning Communities within each of the district's 80 schools affirms the positive impact collaboration among teachers can have on the learning environment and student achievement. Members of the leadership team in WSFCS speak highly of one

another. In the words of FCAE President Tripp Jeffers, "Dr. Martin is a remarkable superintendent who listens and cares about his employees; he was deservedly named the 2011 North Carolina Superintendent of the Year."

Tripp believes that there are actually advantages to doing this work in his state's context in which the union operates without collective bargaining. He mentions, "There are key benefits [to being in a non-collective bargaining state]. ... In our lobbying efforts, there is nothing off the table." While there is clearly a strong commitment to engaging teacher voice in WSFCS on the part of both Dr. Martin and the school board, there have been questions raised about the future of the relationship with the teachers' association if turnover in leadership were to occur. While there is acknowledgement that the profile of an incoming superintendent would certainly impact this relationship, Jeffers, Martin, and Lambeth all agree that the large number of teachers currently organized and participating in FCAE would insist that the established culture of inclusion continue.

WSFCS--and North Carolina generally--have taken on some of today's most ambitious educational reforms. The work currently being done in both the district and the state under RTT and TIF is going to continue to require a shared vision for student success and a willingness to maintain open dialogue in the face of inevitable challenges. The success of the district's RIF policy and the state's teacher and leader evaluation system rests on a variety of factors that include: inter-rater reliability among raters of teacher performance, valid measures of student growth in non-tested grades and subjects, and a system-wide capacity for implementing targeted professional development. Collaboration with teachers and key stakeholders should well serve WSFCS leaders as they work to achieve reasonable consensus on these complex issues.

[TOP](#)